

IDAN RAICHEL

Biography

Brief

Idan Raichel – producer, keyboardist, lyricist, composer and performer. During a career spanning a mere 15 years, Idan has become not only the most successful artist in Israel but also one of Israel's most successful artists abroad, with tours that include performances at some of the leading festivals as well as shows in the most prestigious venues in Europe, the USA, South America, the Far East, Canada and Australia. In addition, Idan has entered into exciting collaborations with many great artists including American pop stars **India Arie** and **Alicia Keys**, and a wide range of artists who are household names in their native countries: Portugal's **Ana Moura**, France's **Patrick Bruel**, Italy's **Ornella Vanoni**, Germany's **Andreas Scholl**, the Italian duo **Mina & Celentano**, the Iranian singer **Golazin**, and Mali's **Vieux Farka Touré**.

As leader of **The Idan Raichel Project**, Idan has become an ambassador representing a world of hope in which artistic collaboration breaks down barriers between people of different backgrounds and beliefs.

In the albums he has produced to-date with **The Project**, as well as in the other musical ventures with which he has been involved, Idan has introduced a new musical culture – a fresh style of production combined with lyrics in a variety of languages including Arabic, German, Spanish, Amharic, French and Hebrew, which worked its way into being part of the Israeli mainstream as well into the hearts of the general public in Israel and overseas.

With **The Idan Raichel Project**, Idan has released four studio albums and a 3-CD set (which contains live concert recordings, songs that were not included in other albums and rare recordings of Raichel in the studio). He has also teamed up with Vieux Farka Touré, releasing two albums by the **Touré-Raichel Collective**; and he has released two solo albums, one a studio album released in December 2015 and the other a 2-CD package mostly recorded “in concert” which was released in November 2017. All these albums have been released around the world.

In Israel, total album sales are approaching 700,000 units; there have been in excess of 2 million digital downloads, and tens of millions of paid-for streaming events. And the number of “hits” on YouTube is around the 113 million mark.

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In 2003, Idan Raichel was catapulted from obscurity to fame when his breakthrough song "Bo'ee," with its entrancing blend of Ethiopian voices and lush global pop, took Israeli radio by storm. Almost overnight, **The Idan Raichel Project**, a collaboration of over 95 musicians of diverse cultural backgrounds, became a top-selling band and a symbol of the power of music to bring people together. A string of hit songs followed, and the audiences grew ever larger.

Idan was born in 1977 to a family with Eastern European roots, and although music was an important part of his upbringing, his parents did not place much emphasis on performing music from his particular cultural background. “I think the fact that I didn't have strong family musical roots is what made me very open to music from all over the world,” says Idan.

Idan started playing the accordion (which he likes to call “the uncoolest instrument ever”) when he was 9 years old, and even at this young age was attracted to the exotic sounds of Gypsy music and tango.

As a teenager, Idan started playing keyboards, and studied jazz in high school, which honed his skills at improvisation and working with other musicians. Idan soon became a successful backup musician and recording session player. After a few years, Idan decided it was time to pursue a project that reflected his musical ideals, and he began working on a demo recording in a small studio he set up in the basement of his parent's home. He thought it would be a good idea to invite a number of different singers and musicians to participate, in order to better demonstrate his distinct styles and the ways in which he worked with a variety of artists.

Some 30 different singers took part in the recordings, most of them with Ethiopian backgrounds. His love for the ever-developing technology and his extensive curiosity about musical roots and authentic instruments led Idan down various experimental paths not generally followed in Israel.

Idan showed his "musical portfolio" to the people at Helicon Music, who decided to release it as an album.

November 2002 saw the release of "Bo'ee" {"Come With Me"}, the first single from the album "The Idan Raichel Project". The song was a blend of Hebrew and Amharic, and introduced a musical concept that continued through the album. "Bo'ee" was an instant hit.

After that one hit, Helicon released the full album – which shot to the top of the sales charts and stayed at #1 for months on end.

As the interest in the recordings began to grow, demand for live shows increased. Given the number of musicians who participated in the recordings, it would have been impossible to have them all appear on stage, so Idan decided to pick a core group of performers, who were versatile, and yet strong individual artists in their own right, to work with him.

From the beginning, Idan saw the project as a collaboration between artists who each bring their own musical culture and talents to the stage. "There would be no front man," Idan says. "I would sit at the side and watch things and see what develops. Every song would have a different singer, we would sit in a half circle and each musician would have a chance to demonstrate what they have to offer." The live show became symbolic of the album, as it brought together a group of people of different backgrounds – yet each being equal to the others.

This sentiment is reflected in the decision to name the collective **The Idan Raichel Project**. Says Idan, "If I had called the album just 'Idan Raichel', people would have thought that Raichel is the main voice on all the songs. I wrote the songs and I arranged and produced them, but I perform them together with other vocalists and musicians. On the other hand, we are not a group. It's something in between." To-date, over 95 different singers aged 16 to 91, from dozens of different countries and cultural backgrounds, have participated in The Project's recordings and performances.

The worldwide release, in 2006, by the US-based record label Cumbancha of an album of tracks taken from The Project's first two Israeli albums, introduced The Project to new audiences.

Billboard Magazine called *The Idan Raichel Project* "**One of the most fascinating titles to emerge in world music this year...a multi-ethnic tour de force**". The **New York Times** selected the album as **one of the top world music releases of the year**, and media from Peru to Portugal were unanimous in their praise. The album also received a nomination as one of the best world music albums of the year by the **BBC Radio 3 Award for World Music**.

2009 saw the release of The Idan Raichel Project's second international album ***Within My Walls***. Much of the album was recorded while Idan was on tour, during recording sessions, in hotel rooms, backstage dressing areas, private homes and other impromptu settings. During his extensive travels, Idan met with scores of musicians from diverse backgrounds, and ever the collaborator, he made sure to exchange musical ideas with them. Along the way, he recorded and co-wrote songs with Colombian singer **Marta Gómez**, Cape Verdean luminary **Mayra Andrade** and the silken-voiced **Somi** of Rwandan and Ugandan heritage.

The Project's spectacular live show has enchanted audiences worldwide. They have headlined in some of the world's most prestigious venues, including New York's **Central Park Summer Stage**, **Apollo Theater**, **Town Hall** and **Radio City Music Hall**, Los Angeles' **Kodak Theater**, the **Sydney Opera House**, **Zenith** and **Bataclan** in Paris, London's **Royal Albert Hall** and many international festivals. They have also performed across Europe, in South & Central America, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Ethiopia, South Africa, Ghana and Japan.

Idan has also worked closely with GRAMMY winner **India.Arie**. They performed together at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC in front of **President Obama** and family on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day . Idan and India played their song "Gift of Acceptance" at the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize gala event in Oslo, Norway, and in August 2011 they performed together at the dedication ceremony for the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington DC. India Arie and Idan toured the US together in 2011.

In July 2011, "Traveling Home" was released, a 3-CD 38 track package including live performances of many of The Project's hits as well as previously unreleased material.

A chance meeting with Malian guitarist **Vieux Farka Touré** (the son of the legendary Ali Farka Touré) led to the formation of **The Touré -Raichel Collective** and the recording of the acclaimed album *The Tel Aviv Session*, which was released in March 2012. The result of an inspired afternoon jam session, the album was hailed by the media as "a masterpiece" (**about.com**), "simply divine" (**Giant Step**), "deeply affecting" (**The Wall Street Journal**), "a cross cultural triumph" (**Time Out Chicago**) and "the best album this year" (**Pop Matters**). The album reached the number one spot on the iTunes World Music sales charts and peaked at number 2 on the Billboard World Music Chart. The Touré-Raichel Collective's US and Canada tour in April 2012 was an unparalleled success with numerous sold-out shows and rave reviews.

The Idan Raichel Project's 2013 album, *Quarter to Six*, featured guest appearances by Portuguese *fado* star **Ana Moura**, Palestinian-Israeli singer **Mira Awad**, German counter-tenor **Andreas Scholl**, Colombia's **Marta Gómez**, **Vieux Farka Touré** and a selection of up-and-coming singers and musicians. In its review, **The Associated Press** commented, "The idea that one could create a cohesive album by pulling together unique voices singing in different languages and from different musical traditions would seem daunting. Yet this challenge is what keyboardist and composer Idan Raichel has embraced and brought to blossom.

In March, 2013, Idan and The Project were honored with an invitation to give a private, after dinner concert for **President Barack Obama** at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's official residence. In July of that year, world-renowned pop star **Alicia Keys** invited Raichel on stage for a special duet during one of her sold-out arena concerts. One month later, Idan shared the stage with French superstar **Patrick Bruel**.

Idan's collaboration with Alicia Keys deepened in September, 2014, when she invited him and Palestinian singer and *qanun* player **Ali Amr** to join her on stage at the Global Citizen Festival in New York's Central Park. The event featured **Jay Z, Beyoncé, Sting, No Doubt** and **Carrie Underwood**, and appearances by numerous global dignitaries and world leaders. For an audience of 60,000, Keys, Raichel and Amr performed "We Are Here," a new song Keys wrote to unite her audience in a global effort for peace, and to encourage young people to play an active role in making the world a better place. The performance was broadcast to a national audience on NBC that evening.

Alicia Keys praised Idan in a video she created to commemorate his selection for the **2014 MTV Role Model Award**. "This is an amazing, amazing award," Keys said in the video, "which is what you are. But really what you are is just an incredible human being who bridges cultures and promotes tolerance, which there's nothing more important than you and your mission and your work. So congratulations because you inspire me all the time."

On September 30, 2014, The Touré-Raichel Collective released their second album, *The Paris Session*. While *The Paris Session* was the result of the same freeform approach that was used in the first album, this time around they decided to feature more songs with vocals, a wider range of instrumentation, and appearances by musician friends such as Senegalese artist **Daby Touré** on bass, Israeli trumpeter **Niv Toar**, and Malian singer **Seckouba Diabate**. Touré and Raichel had honed their interplay over the course of multiple tours together, but the album possessed the same spontaneous, heartfelt magic as its predecessor. The Touré-Raichel Collective toured the US in November 2014, followed by a performance at the New Morning in Paris, France.

On January 12, 2015, Raichel joined French superstar **Patrick Bruel** and Moroccan singer **Youness El Guezouli** on stage at L'Opéra in Paris to sing "Pourquoi ne pas y croire..." (Why Not Believe) in French, Arabic and Hebrew. The symbolic significance of the performance was emphasized by the Charlie Hebdo attacks that had taken place in Paris less than a week earlier.

In 2015, Raichel continued to perform and collaborate with an impressive lineup of international stars, including Italy's **Ornella Vanoni**, Cuban singer **Danay Suarez** and Portuguese singer **Antonio Zambujo**. His touring schedule included a series of concerts in Germany with Andreas Scholl, an appearance at the prestigious Jazz a la Villette festival in Paris with the Touré-Raichel Collective in September 2015, and a December 2015 tour in Japan.

Raichel's first solo album, *Ha'Yad Ha'Chama*, entitled *At the Edge of the Beginning* internationally, was released worldwide on January 22, 2016. The album represents a turning point for the global music star: an opportunity to take stock of the past, ponder love, life and family, and imagine what will truly be important to him in years to come. Raichel is now focusing on his personal life, with his partner – it was she who persuaded him to shave off his trademark dreadlocks, an act that thwarted expectations and symbolized his desire for a fresh start – and their two baby daughters.

The title of the album *At the Edge of the Beginning* sums up this sentiment succinctly. It's an introspective work, consisting of mostly gentle songs with unassuming melodies and arrangements. "This album has been a way for me to find myself, to come to terms with the fact that I am now part of a close family," notes Raichel. "I'm not here for just myself anymore; I'm here for my daughters."

While *At the Edge of the Beginning* does not mean Raichel has put an end to The Idan Raichel Project, he looks forward to opportunities to strip down to the essence of musical expression. "I hope this album will enable me to go on stage, me and a piano, and to tell the audience stories, inspirational thoughts, and just sing songs. I think that this is the ultimate way to be an artist, when you're forced to depend on yourself and on your soul."

In February 2016 Raichel set out on a long tour in Europe which included a Sold Out concert at the legendary Vienna Konzerthaus.

In 2016, Raichel was presented with the "Unsung Hero Award" by Martin Luther King III, the son of the iconic human rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, in recognition of his service and leadership in achieving human dignity, racial equality, and racial harmony for Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to Israel. This was the first time that the prize was awarded to a non-US citizen. In June 2016, following shows in the USA, and 20 concerts "sold out" around Israel, Raichel premiered his solo show "Raichel – Piano – Songs", which grew out of the material on the "At the Edge of the Beginning" album, with a week of concerts at the Shuni Amphitheater.

On 7th July, 2016, within the framework of the annual B'nai B'rith World Center awards for journalism, established a quarter of a century ago by the late Wolf and Hilda Matsdorf, Idan was given a Special Citation, established by the B'nai B'rith World Center to honor performing artists who have fostered closer relations between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora.

On September 2016, Raichel appeared as a guest artist at the show given in Israel in by the well known Greek singer Nikos Vertis. In the same month the Project appeared on stage in Sophia at a special concert where they hosted Martha Gomez as well as local Bulgarian musicians playing on traditional Bulgarian instruments.

In October 2016 the well-known Italian duo Mina and Celentano recorded an Italian version of "Ma'agalim" {from Idan's solo album "At the Edge of the Beginning"}. The song is called "Amami Amami" and was released as the first single from the new duo's new album and reached the #1 slot on iTunes Italy.

As part of a tour in South America in November 2016, Raichel and some of the other members of The Project were accompanied by "21 Ensemble", an orchestra from Buenos Aires. In addition to the shows in Argentina, Raichel also appeared in Brazil and Uruguay – all concerts being "sold out" ahead of the performance date.

In December 2016 yet another melody of Raichel's was recorded by another artist, this time the Iranian singer Golazin recorded "Sabe Deus", from the Quarter to Six album in Persian. At the end of 2016 the album "At the Edge of the Beginning" was chosen by JP Morgan Chase, one of the largest banking institutions in the USA, as one of the "undiscovered and intriguing books, experiences, and music that may be of interest to its clients" in 2017.

January 2017 saw the release of "Spinning Wheel" as a single, and this was followed in May by "A Love Like This" for which Raichel chose Zehava Ben as the vocalist.

In February 2017, just before Raichel was setting off on another long tour of performances in Europe and the USA, there was a Gala Evening at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art to celebrate the Museum's flag-ship exhibition "Regarding Africa – Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism". During the evening Raichel was presented with a special award in recognition of his contribution in bringing peoples together through music.

At the same time the "Raichel – Piano – Songs" tour became a huge success. The show, in which Raichel at last realised his dream of getting close up to his audience and presenting his songs in their original format of piano and voice, stretched into 150 shows in Europe, the USA, South America and, of course, Israel, where it ran for 17 successive dates at the Shuni Amphitheater.

Raichel recorded all the shows at Shuni and selected the best and the most moving of the recordings, giving rise to the new 36-track album with "To Stay" a new instrumental track, new versions of some of his biggest hits, songs which he composed for other artists, and some special versions – some from the rehearsal studios and some with an orchestra. Raichel decided to close the album with a new song called "To Forgive and to Forget".

The new album was released in September 2017 and the tour was rounded out with a series of shows at the Shuni Amphitheater in October 2017. On June 2018, the album was listed as a Gold album.

The Latin Grammy Awards ceremony was held in November 2017, and amongst the nominees for "Album of the Year" was Danay Suarez's album "Palabras Manuales" which included a version of the Cuban songstress and Raichel dueting on a new version of "Closer Now" {"Achshav Karov"} from the "Quarter to Six" album.

In February 2018, Raichel released a single called "And If You'll Come to Me" which he wrote and composed. The song was produced cooperatively with musical producer Noam Akrabi.

In May 2018, Raichel released a single called "Beresheet." The song was written during Raichel's travels around the world. Inspired by his encounters with people from India and Africa. The song is accompanied with a video clip by sand artist Ilana Yahav.

In June 2018 there was a multidisciplinary festival, Raichel's brainchild, at the Live Park Amphitheater in Rishon LeZion. This 10 days festival blend music, food and art alongside a few special appearances by The Idan Raichel Project, with their new line-up. The idea grew out of Raichel's desire to share facets of life that he enjoys with his huge audience. Within the framework of the festival there was a culinary area under the direction of the innovative chef Yuval Ben Neriah, leader of the recent food scene in Israel, an exhibition of photographs by Ziv Koren, known worldwide for his daring and breathtaking documentary projects, and a stage for performances by exciting musicians (SHIRAN, Di Gasen Trio, Quarter to Africa, Yossi Fine..) who brought musical experiences from around the world.