



NIWEL TSUMBU – Biography

“an unmissable listening experience... while his voice reeks of the heat and dust of central Africa, Tsumbu's guitar-playing is a thing of joy” Hot Press

“clever instrumentation and lively compositions” Songlines

Niwel Tsumbu is the fifth child of a family of six born in 1982 in **Democratic Republic of Congo** (ex Zaire). Growing up in Kinshasa, he was a shy boy until the day his brother brought a guitar home. It soon became clear that the sixteen year old Niwel had an amazing innate ability to learn and play the music of his ancestors - **soukous and rumba**.

His mother's hopes that her clever son would become an engineer or a lawyer faded as Niwel would lock himself in his room and play all day. He was later introduced to Crispin Ngoy: a very talented musician who passionately taught Niwel jazz. This led to Niwel discovering many other styles of music which influence him to this day. At seventeen Niwel secretly enrolled himself in Music College.

Niwel Tsumbu moved to Ireland in 2004. He quickly became involved with the Irish music scene and formed many groups as well as starting a long-time collaboration with percussionist Eamonn Cagney.

Niwel's elegant and fluent guitar playing draws from AFRICAN RHYTHMS, RUMBA, JAZZ, CLASSICAL, FLAMENCO and more. Playing electric & acoustic guitars Niwel sings mostly in his native '**Lingala**' and French. He composes and plays a range of music that stretches from contemporary versions of Congolese traditional music from the 1930s & 40s to modern jazz. Niwel's love of the Spanish style of guitar playing beautifully exposes Rumba's Latin roots. As well as playing guitar Niwel plays drums, percussion and saxophone.

Still only 28 years old, Niwel has emerged as an engaging and innovative musician and composer and is in constant demand by his contemporaries. He has performed with **Buena Vista Social Club, The Wailers, Michael O' Súilleabháin, Kila, Cathy Jordan (Dervish), Steve Cooney** and **Nigel Kennedy**. With **Trasna** (Mel Mercier, Liam O Maonlai) Niwel performed at the **Festival of World Cultures** and in **China** at Expo 2010 alongside **Xiaohui Ma**. He has shared the stage with **Baaba Maal** and played concerts in his native Congo and in Paris. His recent interpretation of 'Electric Counterpoint' at The Reich Festival in front of **Steve Reich** was a triumph. Niwel's year-long residency alongside composer **Roger Doyle** continued throughout 2011 at the Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray. Niwel continues to perform with **Donal Dineen** (Parish) at various festivals including Electric Picnic and he recently played some concerts with Republic of Loose.

Niwel's first album '**UH! E ZA NZELA MOLAYI**' was released in 2006. '**SONG OF THE NATIONS**' followed in March 2009 with the band of the same name boasting international musicians including Eamonn Cagney on percussion (Ireland), Peter Erdei on bass (Hungary), Frailan Moran Mendive on percussion (Cuba) and Katherine Dohner on violin (Germany). Album and live reviews were exceptional – see press page for reviews.

Niwel's third album '**S'ALL VIBRATION**' was released in October 2011 leading to Hot Press Magazine describing the album as *“an unmissable listening experience”*. Watch Niwel and band performing “Wake up” from the album live on RTE Television show The View at www.niweltsumbu.com

Over the last 50 years Central Africa has built itself an incredible reputation for giving birth to many of the world's greatest guitarists, and **Congolese Niwel Tsumbu** is a fitting ambassador to carry that torch forward into the 21st century.

Niwel's albums are available **to buy online** from iTunes, www.emusic.com & www.amazon.com

www.niweltsumbu.com

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Niwel Tsumbu ALBUM & LIVE REVIEWS

'S'all Vibration' 2011:

*"clever instrumentation and lively compositions"****

Songlines album review Dec 2011

*"an unmissable listening experience...while his voice reeks of the heat and dust of central Africa, Tsumbu's guitar-playing is a thing of joy" *****

Hot Press album review Oct 6th 2011

'Song of the Nations' 2009:

"Antidotes to the recession don't come much more potent than this. Niwel Tsumbu's indomitable, infectious spirit invaded the intimate confines of Whelan's before his first song had evaporated. Tsumbu takes his audience on a journey of discovery that traverses the peaks and troughs of life's unpredictable terrain with startling precision. He gives full rein to a sweep of syncopated rhythms that have many punters grasping and gasping to keep up."

Irish Times March 2009 live review of album launch concert

"The Congolese musician has done much to pass on the beauty of African music and, through his newest release, continues on his mission to inform us of all that we've been missing out on... Niwel, unfortunately for us, will not remain a Cork secret for long"

Evening Echo 5/5 stars album review April 2009

"There's something about Tsumbu's native language, Lingala that has infused the Congolese guitarist and singer with a spellbinding fluency....Tsumbu's confident juxtaposition of clarinet and guitar, insistent percussion and declamatory vocals trace a path that's all his own...tribal rhythms and transcendent male harmonies declare Tsumbu's intention to carve a niche nobody else has even dreamt of"

Irish Times 4/5 stars album review April 2009

"Tsumbu's guitar playing is nothing short of exceptional and the wall of sound that hits you once you press play is infectious. If you're one of the many unfortunate ones who can't afford a holiday this year, pick up Song of the Nations and experience the world from the comfort of your armchair"

Hot Press album review April 2009

"Niwel and his band are at the top of their profession...Niwel Tsumbu's live show is unmissable"

StarLife Magazine, May 2009 live review

"Niwel Tsumbu trades in good vibrations. His wayward incantations and surgically precise guitar lines ... immense confidence and panache ... had us eating out of the palm of his hand."

Irish Times live review

www.niweltsumbu.com

www.myspace.com/niweltsumbu

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