

LES NUBIANS Biography

Founded by two sisters from Bordeaux, France, inspired by the conscious rap of Public Enemy, De La Soul, and Arrested Development as well as the smoother but no less exhilarating sounds of Soul II Soul and Des'ree, Les Nubians are a new breed of Afropean-styled hip-hop.

Les Nubians debut album, *Princesses Nubiennes*, mixes uplifting messages with contemporary hip-hop stylings. Other French rappers such as MC Solaar and Mel' Groove have forged a blueprint upon which Les Nubians build their sound, equally influenced by classic soul, contemporary R&B and the inspiration of such African world music icons as Miriam Makeba, Ray Lema and Youssou N'Dour.

Born to a French father and Cameroonian mother, Helene and Celia Faussart learned how to sing at a young age. Even from their first performance as a cappella group, journalists in attendance later raved in print about these two charismatic young girls and their wonderful voices.

Inspired by a backstage meeting with jazz singer Abbey Lincoln (who encouraged them to "do it-the greatest thing in the world is to be a singer!"), the group pursued their music relentlessly. The results come to fruition on *Princesses Nubiennes*, an amalgam of everything they've soaked up so far in their life travels, including African roots (the girls lived for several years in Chad), with a jazzy feel, funky rhythms, a hint of British soul and a dash of French cool.

The girls cite a long and varied list of musical inspirations for this distinctive sound, including Miriam Makeba, Ella Fitzgerald, the Fugees, Fela Kuti, and Jazzie B of Soul II Soul. "This album is a kind of travelogue, a kind of journey through all the different kinds of music of the African Diaspora," says Helene. "We begin with the roots-African chants, griot chants-and then after that traditional soul, and after that gospel, blues, jazz reggae, funk and on to more modern styles. (And there's even a hint of jungle in track 5). This was our idea of travel, to offer a tribute to different black music, but still to have a modern touch. Because soon it will be the 21st century, and so we wanted to do something modern. On time."

Their debut album was recorded in England and France and with a core group of English and French backing musicians who've previously worked with the likes of Ronny Jordan, Jhelisa, Positive Black Soul and Des'ree. The duo made their first appearance on the *Jazz A Saint-Germain* compilation, released on Higher Octave Jazz in the U.S.

According to Helene, when it comes to Africans in France, "There is no music that speaks to them, so we wanted to make music that spoke to these people, who have this history to them. But not only that, we wanted to use our music to communicate with the whole world. We felt there was a lack of young people doing a new kind of music. Not to just copy R&B, but to do something original, something personal with it. To let people know what we think, what we stand for.