



# Three Kilos of Coffee: An Autobiography

By Manu Dibango, Danielle Rouard

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**Three Kilos of Coffee: An Autobiography** By Manu Dibango, Danielle Rouard

In 1948, at the age of fifteen, Manu Dibango left Africa for France, bearing three kilos of coffee for his adopted family and little else. This book chronicles Manu Dibango's remarkable rise from his birth in Douala, Cameroon, to his worldwide success—with *Soul Makossa* in 1972—as the first African musician ever to record a top 40s hit.

Composer, producer, performer, film score writer and humanitarian for the poor, Manu Dibango defines the "African sound" of modern world music. He has worked with and influenced such artists as Art Blakey, Don Cherry, Herbie Hancock, Harry Belafonte, Paul Simon, and Johnny Clegg. In Africa, he has helped younger musicians, performed benefit concerts, and transcribed for the first time the scores and lyrics of African musicians.

The product of a "mixed marriage" (of different tribes and religions) who owes allegiances to both Africa and Europe, Dibango has always been aware of the ambiguities of his identity. This awareness has informed all of the important events of his life, from his marriage to a white Frenchwoman in 1957, to his creation of an "Afro-music" which joyfully blends blues, jazz, reggae, traditional European and African serenades, highlife, Caribbean and Arabic music. This music addresses the meaning of "Africanness" and what it means to be a Black artist and citizen of the world.

This lively and thoughtful memoir is based on an extensive set of interviews in 1989 with French journalist Danielle Rouard. Richly illustrated with photographs, this book will be a must for readers of jazz biographies, students of African music and ethnomusicology, and all those who are lovers of Manu Dibango's unique artistry and accomplishments.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **From Publishers Weekly**

Popular African jazz saxophonist Dibango (Soul Makossa; Electric Africa) details his life in the musical sportlight, beginning with his 1948 emigration from Cameroon to France, at age 15. Young Dibango picked up jazz and blues music quickly-learning piano as well as saxophone-but lost his traditional family's approval when word got back to Cameroon of his success as a working musician. Despite his eventual climb to international fame, familial and tribal conflict haunted Dibango, who could not help but see himself as both African and European, a tension that was further exacerbated by his racially mixed marriage. That Dibango beat these formidable odds to make a career out of his music is a testament to his strong spirit, one which permeates this autobiography. If there is a failing, it is in the confusing number of bands, clubs, and performances referred to in the book's limited pages. "In music there's no past and no future, just the present," Dibango notes and that is how he has chosen to tell his life story. Twenty-three pages of personal photos and a discography complete the book.

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### **From Library Journal**

Dibango was born in 1933 in the port city of Douala, Cameroon, to parents from two antagonistic ethnic groups, which helps explain his lifelong blending of seemingly disparate musical styles. He was raised until age 15 according to traditional tribal custom but was then sent to a Paris boarding school, his first term paid for with three kilos of coffee. In school he was exposed to musicians such as Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker. Dibango's love of American jazz, combined with his multicultural background, enabled him to become one of the earliest exponents of world music. In 1973 his third album's title song, "Soul Makossa" reached the American top 40, making him one of the first African musicians to have an international hit, a success that led to an extended engagement at the Apollo Theater. Today, he remains an influential figure with a new album featuring not only an all-star African lineup but popular European artists such as Peter Gabriel and Sinéad O'Connor. Dibango's staying power and influence recommend his autobiography for music collections in all libraries.

*Dan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L. Federation, Curwensville, Pa.*

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### **From Booklist**

In the early 1970s, Dibango brought international attention to African music with his hit, "Soul Makossa." He remains an active composer, performer, and bandleader, and this autobiography proves him an impressive storyteller. Born in Cameroon to parents of different, not entirely amicable tribes, he was a teenager just after World War II when his father sent him to be educated in France with three kilos of coffee to pay his tuition. He began playing the saxophone with other African musicians and achieved stardom after a series of adventures and struggles. He loads his book with poignant observations on early modern jazz, the international music business, and African politics. On the last subject, he risks raising the ire of many with such remarks as this denunciation of foreign aid: "Africa waits for rich countries to erase its debt. This is a cheat of a remedy: the people and their successive governments tell themselves it will always be this way." Recommended to those who want to delve deeply into what is too often lazily categorized as "world music."

*Aaron Cohen*

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### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Dorothy Guillen:**

This book untitled Three Kilos of Coffee: An Autobiography to be one of several books that will best seller in this year, this is because when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this book in the book retail outlet or you can order it by way of online. The publisher in this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quicker to read this book, because you can read this book in your Cell phone. So there is no reason to your account to past this e-book from your list.

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#### **Charles Baker:**

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