

NOW.

now.mmedia.me



MYRA ABDALLAH

Published: 17/06/2016 03:32 PM

Talking to Maurice Louca at Beirut & Beyond's kick-off event



Egyptian musician and composer **Maurice Louca** lives and works in Cairo; he is the co-founder of the bands Bikya, Alif and Dwarves of East Agouza, and also lends his sound to numerous projects, composing for theatre, film and contemporary art. He has released two music albums “Garraya” in 2011 and “Binhayyi al-Baghabghan” (Salute the Parrot) in 2014, and last night, Louca performed at Station Beirut at **Beirut and Beyond International Music festival** kick-off event. NOW talks to Louca about his career as an Egyptian musician who plays modern style music.

NOW: How hard is it for a musician to start a career in Egypt?

Maurice Louca: I think making a career in music is tough everywhere in the world and in that respect, Cairo is no different.

NOW: Your music brings a modern style to the Egyptian music scene, how hard was it for you to promote your work in the beginning?

Louca: When I started, the most difficult thing was getting to be in shows. However, this is a common issue amongst all musicians and I don't think that I was the only musician to face this is a difficulty. In general, when I first started my career, there were fewer opportunities than there are today. Nowadays the situation is better than when I first started in the 1990s.

NOW: Who supported you and helped you grow your audience and fans?

Louca: The list is too long. I was very fortunate in that respect. One of my biggest supporters is Khyam Allami (Nawa Recording), who released my latest solo record (Salute the Parrot). His drive, his belief in this work and the fact that it had to be released in the best possible way helped me reach large audiences. This had a huge impact on my career as a musician.

NOW: How did your love for music start, and how did you decide to make a career out of it?

Louca: I was very young and I don't even remember how. I started playing the guitar when I was 12 and I think that it was at that time when I decided that I will do this for a living.

NOW: Some critics who have written about your music state that it is a reflection of the current situation in Egypt. To what extent does Egypt's reality affect your work?

Louca: This is how many people interpreted my music. However, for me, it's a lot more personal than that— even though I do believe that where you live always has an impact on you. More particularly, Cairo is a very intrusive and intense place, in both positive and negative ways, so it does seem to force its stamp on things more than other cities.

NOW: How do you think your work, like other artists' work, constitutes as a system to face violence in the region?

Louca: The idea is not about constituting systems. I think that arts, music in particular, work outside

these forms. They can definitely inspire and change your perception and that is overwhelmingly empowering on its own.

NOW: Taking into consideration that your music is considered 'modern music,' in which you tried to integrate traditional Egyptian music, did you have to face negative critics regarding your work?

Louca: I read similar reviews several times. However, it is definitely not in my interest to rework or re-interpret tradition or traditional music, especially in my last album. In general, I felt that the record was well received. Just like everything else, it had some negative criticism but the positive ones were more than expected.

NOW: What is the main message that you try to deliver through your work? Is it only a reproduction of feelings or is there a certain message behind it?

Louca: For me, it's about expression and communication, having a direct message turns it into propaganda, which is a very empty and unimaginative use of the medium of the language of music.

NOW: We know that you have fans everywhere. Do you consider that your biggest crowd of listeners is outside Egypt? If yes, why?

Louca: On the contrary, I feel that Egypt is still the place where I have the biggest crowd of listeners and fans.

NOW: Are you planning to a release third album anytime soon? Can you tell us more about your future plans?

Louca: Unfortunately, there isn't a plan in the near future for a third release yet. During the last couple of years, I was busy working on several different projects, but I do hope to start working on a new record soon.