

# **FRANCIS MBAPPE & FM TRIBE**

## **“NEED SOMEBODY”**

### **FM TRIBE VOL. 1**



**“Think of all the things you may have liked about modern African music over the last thirty years, combine that with some of your favorite American R&B concerts over the last forty years, and you start to get a picture of the music of Francis Mbatia & FM Tribe on NEED SOMEBODY.”**

**D.C. Donovan - World Discoveries**

"It felt a little nostalgic to be back in SOB's for the showcase. Francis Mbappe and his band FM Tribe headlined, and it was great to see so many old friends who turned up to hear the music at the hallowed downtown club.

Francis performed a set that drew on jazz, makossa, and bikutsi putting Cameroonian music on the festival weekend map. He was backed by a full band including Dominick James, guitar; Ibrahim Dianne, percussion; Edo, trumpet; and Harvey Wirht, drums. One of the greats on his instrument, the bass guitar, his playing is much in demand. His background includes his work as Manu Dibangu's musical director for nearly a decade before settling in New York City and releasing several records with his band FM Tribe."

-Review of SOB's show from Jan 2023

**“Think of all the things you may have liked about modern African music over the last thirty years, combine that with some of your favorite American R&B concerts over the last forty years, and you start to get a picture of the music of Francis Mbappe & FM Tribe on NEED SOMEBODY.**

**Francis is a bass player and his funky fender bass style drives the band, always in the groove with music primarily for dancing and listening, not meditation - yet still music with a message.**

**Occasionally his sound reminds me of the great Manu Dibango of Cameroon, who helped revolutionize African music in the 1960s and 70s: so no surprise that Dibango guest stars on cut 13, 'Dikalo Dikalo'.**

**Looking at the lineup of musicians and other information in the liner notes showed a few surprises, such as David Gilmore on guitar. Most of the recording was done in New York City with a little in Paris: so much great African music is now recorded outside of Africa.**

**All the tunes were written by Francis Mbappe himself: we thoroughly enjoyed each and every one; the man writes great funky dance music and his bass playing is terrific with thumb-popping tremendous slides, each note right on the money.**

**Tasteful, interesting arrangements, some occasional English lyrics: this is the kind of music we should be getting on MTV and the radio.**

**Check out the title song 'Need Somebody': this could have been a rock anthem if written and recorded by the Kinks, the Who or The Rolling Stones.**

**If more people heard NEED SOMEBODY, most would like it: it has that crossover feel without being pretentious to the sellout fad of the moment that dominates much crossover music.**

**You'll also hear touches of rock and jazz blended so skillfully into the whole dance blend: in other words, NEED SOMEBODY is a truly great recording suitable for a wide audience and essential for any definitive African music collection."**

**D.C. Donovan - World Discoveries**

**"The Brooklyn-based Mbappe has worked with eclectic bassist/producer Bill Laswell and is best known as Camaroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango's long-time bassman. On this joyous debut, his writing, singing, and guitar chops are in full view, while low-enders will dig his subtly percolating parts (via his '69 Jazz Bass and Modulus Genesis) on tracks like "Awololo Iyo," "Blues of Life," and "Spirit of the Village." (CJ)**

**By Chris Jisi | October 2005 - BASS PLAYER MAGAZINE**

**"Life is planet Africa!" sings Francis Mbappe, as this 40-minute celebration kicks into gear, and if listeners have any doubts about his premise, they'll find plenty**

**of supporting evidence in the tracks that follow. Mbappe, a bassist with an impressive resume of collaborations that includes gigs with Herbie Hancock, Fela Kuti and Youssou N'Dour, moved from his native Cameroon to New York a few years ago, but he hasn't forgotten his roots. By incorporating them into settings that draw from jazz, funk, folk and other styles, he has created a fresh, open-minded global fusion. And while his virtuoso electric bass playing frequently takes center stage, as on the quick-stepping "Awololo Iyo," he also fattens up the sound with the help of a dozen supporting musicians who sing and play guitar, violin, flute, organ and percussion. The rootsy character of these pieces, each with its own message, is marked by humility and measured restraint. The unexpected remix version of "Wan De We" toward the end is an enthusiastic call to dance, delivered with just vocals and percussion. A nice touch, indeed."**

#### **NILS JACOBSON PHIL - GLOBAL RHYTHM**

**"Bassist Henri Francis Mbappe Mabole Elessa is from Cameroon. His charismatic persona has shared the stage with musicians such as Herbie Hancock, Manu Dibango, Fela Kuti, Ashanti Tokoto and he was also the musical director of Manu Dibango's band. His voice can be heard on the albums "Surtension," "Afry Jazy," "Abele Dance," "Baobab Sunset" and "Waka Africa." It features Peter Gabriel, Youssou N'dour, Salif Keita and King Sunny Ade.**

**Francis runs his own music production company "FM GROOVE INC.," through which he gathers musicians of different origins, education and artistic backgrounds. "Celebration" must be celebrated as it is: the cross-point between songs both traditional and new. This release is loaded with emotion but it also contains**

**balance and simplicity with high skill through humility. Throughout the songs the listener can feel virtuosity, strength, passion and fire. Mbappe's words are fully charged with feeling whether written in his language, French or English.**

**The music is joyful, creative and melangée avec including elements of his tradition. His many influences coupled with his origin are brilliantly blended with jazz and the result is a new music. Mbappe is in constant creation, arranging albums and working on film music, making Francis un personnage in the New York scene of nowadays.**

**Being a highly respected musician in New York and at the same time recalling his own roots makes Mbappe a special character. Add to this the joie de vivre and you've got the CD Celebration.**

**Henri Francis Mbappe Mabole Elessa is a creator and the myriad of projects in which Mbappe is and has been involved with prove that this joyful man is really an epicurean."**

**by: Dr. Ana Isabel Ordonez - JAZZREVIEW.COM**

**"Afropop musicians in the West often face a quandary. Because perceptions of Africa's modernity (or lack thereof) remain difficult to supplant, the most accomplished players generally walk a tightrope between over-sophistication and primitivism -in hopes of conveying both slickness and earthiness. Fans who've sampled the range of sounds passing through the Houston Street nook Zinc Bar during African Fridays know that the greatest music is right down the middle. )**

**Perhaps the best thing about the new self-produced disc by Zinc regular Francis Mbappe (mmm-BAH-pay) is that he has figured out how to let rawness temper**

**his jazz-bred snazziness. This wasn't second nature for this expat: Mbappe, a bassist from Cameroon, directed Manu "Soul Makossa" Dibango's touring band for almost a decade. The disc blends Pan-African grooves and Mbappe's electric bass bubbles through the mix on Celebration, and the combination of his homespun arrangements and confident vocals (as on "Awololo Iyo" and "Wan de We") is equally wins. The credits read like a who's who of local scene makers, from drummer Jojo Kuoh ("Celebration") to violinist Mark Feldman, whose multitracking on "Banaba Africa" and "Mabolan" is ravishing. The whole exemplifies Mbappe's balancing act."**

**K. Leander Williams - TIMEOUT(January 12-18, 2006, issue 237)**