

## The French Scene — Yannick Noah: Tennis Player, Popular Singer and Humanist

**When the name Yannick Noah comes up in a conversation, two images immediately come to mind: Noah, the charismatic tennis player at Rolland Garros and Noah, the African-French Reggae singer. The French have always closely followed Noah, not just for his impressive career as a tennis man or as the popular singer he has become but also for his generous and warm hearted personality. Yannick is above all a humanist and a caring person and has continuously demonstrated it through various humanitarian endeavours.**

Yannick was born in Sedan (France) in 1960. He is the son of Zacharie Noah, a former Cameroonian professional football player who played for Sedan and whose team won the French Cup in 1960, and Marie-Claire, a former player with the French national women's basketball team. The family returned to their African roots and Cameroon in 1963 where the young Noah pursued his double passion for tennis and music. He was “discovered” in Cameroon by the American tennis player Arthur Ashe and thus earned a return ticket to France where he became a professional tennis player in 1977. He won a total of 23 singles titles and 16 doubles titles. His career-high singles ranking was No. 3 in the world in 1986. His most memorable achievement in his tennis career was winning the French Open (Rolland Garros) in 1983, thus becoming the first and only Frenchman to win this tournament in its 37-year history. He and Arthur Ashe also share the distinction of being the only black male players to have won a grand slam tennis tournament.

Following his retirement as a tennis pro, Noah became the captain of the French team that won the Davis Cup in 1991 for the first time in 59 years. Noah's team with Henri Leconte and Guy Forget defeated the highly-favoured US team with Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras. He coached the French Davis Cup team to victory again in 1996. Noah was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2005.

Since 1991, Noah has become a very popular singer: His first big success was *Saga Africa* which was sung with the players and the public at the famous Davis Cup victory in 1991. His second album, *Urban Tribu*, wasn't a big success and he waited until 1997 to release the song *Oh Rêve*, a controversial pacifist rendition of the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*. He issued his third LP in 2000, projecting the music and culture of his African heritage. Dubbed *Afro-reggae* by the singer himself, his new sound revitalized his stature on the charts, and the single *Les Lionnes* reached number one. Since then, all his albums have always climbed to the top of the charts and he continuously performs at live concerts around Europe.

His latest album, *Charango*, has just been released and he will embark on a tour in May 2007. The songs combine the basis of Reggae and the Peruvian musical instrument called the *Charango*. To discover the singer and his music, you can click on the album on this page\* and listen to excerpts of some of his songs, or you can go to Noah's official website:

[www.yannicknoah.com](http://www.yannicknoah.com)

Noah's sports genes have been passed on to one of his children. He is the father of 5 children with 3 different women and one of his sons, Joakim, plays college basketball in the USA with the University of Florida Gators team. He became very popular in the States when his team won the NCAA national championship in 2006 and he was elected best player of the final four.

Noah is very active in charity work. He supports *Enfants de la Terre*, a charity which is mostly run by his mother, and he also founded *Fête le Mur* in 1996, a tennis charity for disadvantaged children. Noah appears frequently on many French TV shows and he is often present for programmes that promote charitable causes. The French have been charmed by his unflinching cheerfulness, his warm smile and above all by his heart of gold.

*Vincent Anthonioz*

## A Selection of DVDs

### ***“On connaît la chanson”***

A movie by very sensitive film-maker Alain Resnais where the team of excellent actors express themselves by talking—or by singing famous French tubes. The story, starting from a misunderstanding between two persons (one of them is a real estate agent), is both very funny and full of charm. The comedy received 7 *César* Prizes in 1998, the year it was issued. It is rated all public.

### ***“L'un reste, l'autre part”***

With a set of actors who are considered among the best in contemporary France (Daniel Auteuil, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Nathalie Baye, Pierre Arditi and Miou-Miou), this film by Claude Berri (2005) is above all very humane. This comedy is also a touching love story, full of humour. It is also rated all public.

## **Renting DVDs online**

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