

Cameroon: Jazz Lovers Celebrate International Day

By Laure Nganlay, 6 May 2013

Declared by UNESCO in 2012, the economic capital vibrated to the musical rhythm last Tuesday.

At exactly 7:30 as announced, the hall was set. With the lights down, the hall was silent, jam-packed with an expectant audience. After 10 years of absence from home, it was a jubilant Judee (Judith Kisop, real names) who mounted the rostrum at the French Institute in Douala on Tuesday April 30. The Switzerland-based Cameroonian musician was offering a musical concert as part of activities to commemorate the second edition of the World Jazz Day. Dressed in a black gown accompanied by typical African beats, she presented a repertoire with songs from her two albums "Judee... Unmasked" (2005) and "Judee... every time" (2011). For about 30 minutes, the public was thrilled with five songs ranging from salsa, reggae and African traditional rhythms, with a short song in Swahili, celebrating Jazz's birthday.

Prior to her performance, other artists gained the floor. The first was Valneze Tala, a singer and bassist who plays in his native Bandjoun dialect. Another guest was the ABC Group renowned for their expertise in jazz and traditional African sounds. They spiced the evening with an interpretation of popular Jazz track "Take Five". One of their songs was voiced by Ebony Donald Westlie, a replay of "Assiko" with Jazz undertones. Organised by the Cameroon Music Council, the musical concert was preceded by a panel discussion on the perception, practice and consumption of Jazz in Cameroon, with four resource persons.

In other parts of Douala, jazz lovers commemorated in pomp. At "La Chaumière" jazz club, it was a moment to revisit old as well as discover new jazz repertoires. Budding talents like Bibiane Sadey expressed their know-how, while the orchestra interpreted songs by the best Jazz musicians ever. During a session opened to the public, talents were revealed, among which Amy Banda, a journalist, who displayed her singing skills by interpreting Asa's hit track "Jailer". At the end, the organiser, Urbain Assoma, expressed total satisfaction for the turn out and hitch-free running of the night.