

NATACHA ATLAS

GENERAL BIOG

As Europe currently struggles with a supposed clash between Western and Islamic civilisations Natasha Atlas is a fine example of how the best of both cultures can fuse beautifully. Natacha Atlas (it's her real name) was born in Belgium, of Middle Eastern descent, with ancestral and family links to Egypt, Palestine and Morocco. Having lived in Brussels, Egypt, Greece and England, her experience of different cultures has most certainly influenced her music.

Atlas's career began in the 1980s when she sang on club hit Timbal then joined Jah Wobble's Invaders Of The Heart. This led to her meeting London multi-culti band Trans Global Underground who fused dance music with Indian and Arabic influences. Atlas became Trans Global's vocalist and resident belly dancer and the most glamorous figure on the early 90s free festival and rave scene.

Atlas launched her solo career with *Diaspora* in 1995. Atlas's ability to blend Arabic music and contemporary Western pop have won her a wide international audience. Her albums have ranged from the shimmering, traditional beauty of *Foretold In The Language Of Dreams* featuring Syrian qanun master Abdullah Chhadeh to the bouncy rap-pop-funk-Hindi-French chanson blend of *Something Dangerous*. Her latest album, 2006's *Mish Maoul*, mixes electro tracks with rappers against epic orchestrated ballads where Natasha is backed by The Golden Sounds Studio Orchestra of Cairo. Atlas is not only a gifted singer but one unafraid of pushing boundaries.

This sense of adventure has found Atlas employed by soundtrack composer David Arnold to sing on such scores as *Stargate* and *Die Another Day* while she has lent her vocals to recordings with the likes of Nitin Sawhney, The Indigo Girls, FunDaMental, Musafir, Apache Indian and many, many others.

Atlas's ability to break down borders and bring different cultures together was noted by Mary Robinson (ex-President of Ireland) who, in 2001, appointed Atlas Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Conference Against Racism.

"She embodies the message that there is a strength in diversity," noted Robinson of Atlas, "that our differences – be they ethnic, racial or religious – are a source of riches to be embraced rather than feared."

Garth Cartwright