

# The true face of 2Face

*Idibia: On respecting women, tourism and why Africa's time has come*

**Innocent Ujah Idibia**, aka 2Face, is arguably one of Nigeria's best-known music artists. *Belinda Otas* met up with the *African Queen*-hit maker, and he tells it as it is.

**The New African Woman is all about empowering African women. Your first single, *African Queen*, paid homage to the African woman. What is your take on African women in the Africa of today?**

For me an African woman is very warm, strong and respectful. And by respectful, I don't mean stupid respectfulness – because there are two kinds of respect (he switches into Nigerian Pidgin English) *and some respect na mumu* (stupidity respect). *Even though say person dey beat you, you still dey respect am*. And African women are beautiful. These are the things that I find great about African women.

**Let's do some plain speaking: there is so much out there in terms of your personal life. 'Oh he is with this person, he is with that person, he is this and he is that.' As a big celebrity, do you worry about how this affects your fan base?**

It bothers me a little. But from my

point of view, I have nothing to hide. I just want them to see the truth about me. Then they can love me or hate me, at least I know. If you hide something and it then comes out, it's like your world comes crashing down and I don't want that to be my life. I don't want to have tension or fear that people discovered something about me. I don't want to have that. I want to sleep peacefully. Anything and everything about me is out there.

If you know it, you know it. If you still love my music, I'm happy. If you don't love my music, I hope I can convince you at the end of the day that it has got nothing to do with my music. So I am really not afraid of facts about my life coming out, and that's if they are actually the facts.

**But there will always be constant interest in your life, true or false. How do you maintain a balance between your private and public life?** So many people don't respect boundaries when it comes to a famous

face. They forget you are human and that you need your privacy. But in this profession I have to accept that I am going to lose some privacy. When I started my career, I was aware that at one point the question of privacy would be an issue and would happen sometime or the other. I try to be as polite as I can be when someone tries to intrude into my privacy, but I also try to keep my private life private, except for those aspects that are public knowledge.

**Does it not bother you that part of your life is public knowledge?**

No, I'm someone who really doesn't hide anything. Even before I was 2Face Idibia, I never had a hidden side. I have always been very plain, like an open book, and until this moment (once again, he goes all Nigerian Pidgin English on us) the only things wey dey private when I wan go toilet (laughing) or when I dey sleep. But basically everything about me, people know.



## Celebrity Interview

**Coming back to your music, what continues to inspire you as a musician after all these years? As an artist, what should we expect from you and what do you expect of yourself?**

I have been in the industry for 12 years now and what keeps me going is that music is what I love, it's something that is in me. I will die if I stop singing. Apart from that, there are so many young artists coming through and things are changing every day in the music industry as well as in fashion and culture. So the desire to always come out with something new that is to high standards, empowers, makes me grow and keeps me hungry. I'm going to keep producing good music and for myself, I just want to be one of the greatest out of Africa.

**What excites you about the current state of the Nigerian music industry?**

It has exploded, that is the word I would like to use. There's an outflow of talent upon talent and these guys don't sit and wait for someone to come and grab or get them. They have the zeal and energy to get up and push themselves, and that is what I really love about what is going on in Nigeria and Africa right now, as far as music is concerned.

**What do you consider has been a defining moment in your career?**

I think it was the first time I went to the *MTV Europe Awards* in Portugal. It was amazing because they did a pre-award concert and people from all parts of the world were there and I was surprised that they were singing along to my songs and I thought okay, this is interesting and then, the next day I got the award. That was very exciting.

**Whom do you most admire musically among your contemporaries?**

There are some that I can really say yes, this guy is doing well, has got it and has the drive. There are so many guys that have come before and after me but are no more, but some of these guys are going to be here for a long time. I know people like Asa, D'Banj, PSquare, Banky W, Rock Steady and Dami Krane – who by the way are guys I'm working with now – Wizkid, Wande Coal, Don Jazzy, Sound Sultan, El Dee, M.I... the list is endless. These guys are really talented and they are holding their camp together right.



**“The desire to always come out with something new, to high standards, empowers, makes me grow and keeps me hungry.”**

**Your music videos reflect Nigeria and Africa. What is it about your Nigerian heritage that you are very proud to share with the world?**

Wow! *Omo which one I go chose na?* (He asks his manager, again reverting to Nigerian Pidgin English.) I think it's my Pidgin English because it's one of the major things that represent us. The world has now gone beyond animal skin and painting your face to represent Africa. I say our lingo and language that we use because it's what we communicate with on the streets and is a major asset.

**You were recently part of, and one of the chosen performers at the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's conference (UNWTO) which took place in Calabar State. One would not associate you with a tourism conference. Why did you accept to be involved?**

There is so much focus on Nigeria and Africa right now and a lot is happening with new developments in terms of tourism and entertainment. Almost everything has now been much exhausted in other parts of the world; everyone is now looking at Africa, the continent that has it all.

There is so much to be made from tourism. Beyond that, here in Nigeria, it's an opportunity for people to come and learn about our ways and culture. That can lead to investment opportunities. Having said that though, there is still so much to be done in

terms of security and infrastructure to make Nigerian tourism worthwhile.

**The UNWTO conference had a strong focus on women and youth. As a performer whom many youth look up to, how do you use your platform to give back to Nigerian youths?**

In terms of tourism, Nigerian music and the accompanying videos we make, I believe we have helped sell Nigeria to the outside world. People worldwide have heard our music and seen our videos. They now know what we do, and what Nigeria can offer.

But it has not always been like that. There was a time back in the day, when musicians were seen as a “no-gooders”. No parent wanted their child to do music or even go to music school. But now, I have parents calling me for advice because their children are good at singing and what can they do? So it's opening up and we are making progress, making good music and are at least making a good living out of it. So many youths are embracing that business aspect of it; they are not just singing anymore, they are doing it as a serious business now. I think because I took it seriously and they have seen where it has taken me, it has encouraged a lot of youth to handle their business properly.

In terms of giving back, my civic duty to society *we dey sing some songs* that talk about what should be in our country and comment on politics. We have really made the youths see and feel a part of it because we talk about it. Unlike before, a lot of youths did not want to talk about politics or get involved because they felt and thought it didn't affect them but now, when they hear us stress issues, they get involved.

**How are you giving back to your society?**

We have The 2Face Idibia Foundation, whose main focus is service to humanity and we have partnered with a foundation called to help care for premature babies, which is a big problem in Nigeria and Africa. So many children who are born and are supposed to be alive don't make it because there are no adequate facilities to take care of them. For four years now, the Foundation has been helping to provide the right care. It has been successful and we keep trying, but it is never enough. ■



## Challenging Conventional Wisdom

Saturday December 1 2012

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

**TED<sup>x</sup> Euston**  
x = independently organized TED event

**Don't miss in the February/March issue**

**Africa's Top 50 Women**  
in Business and Finance

**Travel Special**  
Weddings, Honeymoon and Caribbean

**Top 10 Celebrity Fashion Style Icons**

**Health and Wellbeing**  
A to Z of Black Women's Health



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

