

Preview**CMA VIVA! & Gala: The Idan Raichel Project**

by Mike Telin



Recently voted Israel's musician of the decade, musician, composer and producer Idan Raichel exemplifies the term *World Music*. On Saturday, February 16 beginning at 7:30 pm in Gartner Auditorium, the Cleveland Museum of Art's VIVA! & Gala series presents The [Idan Raichel Project](#). During the past ten years Raichel has worked with nearly 100 different musicians and singers from around the globe. "Each album has different bands and different styles," Raichel explained

during a telephone conversation from his home in Tel Aviv. "We'll have a seven member group and will explore many songs and their rhythms."

Born in Kfar Saba, Israel, in 1977 to a family with Eastern European roots, Idan Raichel began playing the accordion at the age of nine, and somehow always found himself attracted to Gypsy music and Tango. During high school he played keyboards and studied jazz and while serving in the military he joined the Army rock band and toured military bases performing covers of Israeli and European pop songs.

Following his military service Raichel worked as counselor at a school for immigrants and troubled youth, many of whom were part of the growing Ethiopian Jewish community, and also became interested in their music. "Like my family we're all immigrants. Yes, they played contemporary music but it still had so many cultural influences."

It was while Raichel was working as keyboardist and producer that he and his colleagues first talked the idea of bringing together the musical traditions of the many cultures living in Israel. "We thought, wouldn't it be cool to sing in the native languages – the voices of the people who are in the streets." Raichel, who has a friendly, down-to-earth style of speaking, says the instant success of the projects was a surprise. "After the release of the single, DJ's everywhere started playing it." He laughs. "But it wasn't until we started playing outside of Israel that people began to consider it world music."

His projects are a fusion of numerous musical styles and the lyrics are in Hebrew, Arabic, Amharic, Swahili, Spanish, and Creole Portuguese, English as well as others. For him it's all about the collaboration and interestingly, Idan Raichel refers to himself as the creator and leader of the Project. "I write music, perform and sometimes I just produce. I'm kind

of like a Spike Lee or Woody Allen. I only put myself into a song if it's done in an honest, artistic way."

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