

ANTIBALAS BIO

It's hard to believe that more than twenty years have passed since Antibalas's humble beginning as a neighborhood dance / protest band in the block parties and underground parties in pre-gentrified Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Over the past two decades they have evolved into what The Guardian called "one of the world's finest Afrobeat bands" while enjoying equal renown for their cross-genre collaborations with legends of popular music. With a heavy balance of experience and new blood, the group leaps into 2020 with their new Daptone Records-full-length "Fu Chronicles."

Founded in 1998 by saxophonist Martín Perna, early incarnations of the group included several members of The Dap-Kings including bassist / producer Gabriel Roth, guitarist Binky Griptite, keyboardist Victor Axelrod, conguero Fernando "Bugaloo Velez," and trumpeter Anda Szilagyi. As the group expanded, it absorbed younger musicians from the Daptone family including bassist Nick Movshon (El Michels, Black Keys) and other musical natives and transplants from downtown Manhattan and North Brooklyn music scenes.

In 1999, Perna and Roth dropped in at an atelier / dojo belonging to Duke Amayo. They invited him to a neighborhood concert and then reached out to him later as an emergency substitute for a show. Amayo soon became a fixture in the group, first on percussion, then later on vocals, vibraphone, and keyboards and moving to center stage as the group's frontman and creating the Afro-Spot, the band's headquarters as well as the home of the first Daptone Records studio.

Over the next few years, the band performed several times a month throughout NYC at the Afro-Spot, at benefits, lofts, block parties, and at their Lower Manhattan weekly residency called "Africalia" with regular appearances by friends including Sharon Jones, Lee Fields, and The Sugarman Three. After their second release, "Talkatif" (2002, Ninja Tune), the group began touring heavily throughout North America and Europe including performances at Glastonbury, Montreux Jazz Festival, Coachella, Bonnaroo, and the Newport Jazz Festival. Over the years, expanded their travels to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South America, and most recently, Hong Kong.

In the late 2000s, after nearly ten years of road touring, Antibalas was chosen by choreographer Bill T Jones, to serve as the band for the Tony-award winning Broadway musical "Fela." Around the same time, the band began to draw the attention of the Roots. The two groups joined with Public Enemy to perform a live version of the entire "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold us Back" at the 2009 Roots Picnic as well as the Red Bull Battle of the Bands, as well as numerous guest appearances on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon.

Antibalas has also served as the house band for several star-studded tribute shows at Carnegie Hall and the Apollo Theater paying tribute to the music of Aretha Franklin, David Byrne, Paul Simon, and Billie Holiday, backing dozens including Allen Toussaint, Cee Lo Green, Sharon Jones, Santigold, and Angelique Kidjo.

Over the years, different members have traded production and composition duties from album to album. On the new album—“Fu Chronicles”—Amayo leads us through a thrilling sonic journey of kung fu meets Afrobeat, weaving together the strands of Edo and Yoruba cultural memory from Nigeria with his training and study in Chinese martial arts.

Recorded in the Summer of 2018, over seventeen musicians and singers crammed into the storied Daptone House of Soul in Bushwick to record the massive body of work. With live versions and arrangements stretching up to thirty minutes, Perna, Amayo, and Roth worked tirelessly to preserve the hypnotic power of the long-form live arrangements into six concise and powerful album tracks.

“Fu Chronicles” will be the eighth studio album from Antibalas, who have been releasing music over four decades; *Liberation Afro Beat Vol. 1* (1999), *Talkatif* (2002), *Who Is This America?* (2004), *Security* (2007), *Government Magic* (2011), *Antibalas* (2012), *Where the Gods are In Peace* (2017), *Fu Chronicles* (2020)