

Afro-Semitic Experience Band Bio

The Afro-Semitic Experience is the original mash-up band. They combine jazz, blues, gospel, and Jewish liturgical and klezmer music with elements of African and Middle Eastern rhythms. Founded in 1998 by African-American jazz pianist Warren Byrd and Jewish-American bassist David Chevan, the group is dedicated to social and racial justice and to promoting interfaith understanding and dialogue through their music. They have released ten albums, performed at numerous festivals and concerts, and received critical acclaim for their unique sound and message.

At the core of the Afro-Semitic Experience's sound is the melding of two seemingly disparate musical traditions: the Jewish music of Eastern Europe and the African American spiritual and gospel traditions. By blending these two styles, the group creates a distinctive sound that is both deeply rooted in tradition and entirely original. Their performances are known for their high energy, virtuosity, and emotional intensity. The group's members are skilled musicians who bring their own distinct styles and backgrounds to the music. Warren Byrd's piano playing is characterized by his use of gospel and blues influences, while David Chevan's bass lines draw on his expertise in Jewish synagogue and klezmer music.

The group's 10 recordings showcase their diverse range of styles and influences. Their debut album, "This Is the Afro-Semitic Experience", was released in 2001 and received critical acclaim for its fusion of Jewish and African-American music. Their 2011 album, "Further Definitions of the Days of Awe," explores the themes of forgiveness, repentance, and renewal in the Jewish High Holy Days. Their most recent album, "Freedom Seder," was released in 2020 and features a mix of original compositions and new arrangements of traditional music.

The Afro-Semitic Experience has performed at numerous festivals and concerts around the world, including the Hartford Jazz Festival, the New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas, the Portland Jazz Festival, Amsterdam Jewish Music Festival, Washington DC Jewish Music Festival, and the Toronto Festival of Jewish Music. In addition to their performances, the group also leads workshops and educational programs on the topics of interfaith dialogue and cultural understanding.

The Afro-Semitic Experience has also been recognized for their social activism and commitment to promoting understanding and tolerance between different cultures and religions. They have performed at numerous racial justice and interfaith events and have worked with a wide range of organizations that combat hate and discrimination. The Afro-Semitic Experience's music and performances are a powerful testament to the shared human experience and the ability of music to transcend cultural and religious boundaries. Through their innovative fusion of Jewish and African-American musical traditions, the group has created a unique sound that is both uplifting and thought-provoking, inspiring listeners to come together in a spirit of unity and harmony.