

# Jamika Ajalon

## « Helium Balloon Illusions »



Jamika Ajalon, charismatic American poetess, film director and long time Zenzile collaborator based in London, releases her debut solo album the 5<sup>th</sup> march 2007. «Helium Balloon Illusions» showcases a range of influences, mixing hip hop and electro, dub and spoken word all built on a foundation of amazing grooves and incisive lyrics.

Anyone who has followed her work with Zenzile since the late nineties, will already be familiar with her phenomenal energy and sensual delivery, which has seen her dubbed “the female Tricky” and the “underground Grace Jones” by some reviewers.

The Zenzile Family was first introduced to and fell in love with this exiled American when she was the surprise guest artist at their live show at the legendary Fridge in Brixton in 1999. That chance meeting uncovered an incredible chemistry and Jamika became the first guest on Zenzile’s 5+1 series of recordings (next were Sir Jean from Meï Teï Shô and Vincent Segal from Bum Cello). That initial EP proved so successful that Jamika has participated in almost all subsequent Zenzile recordings. Jamika has also contributed her feline style and electric stage presence on the band’s live tours including Austin USA (South by South West Festival), in Montreal festival, at Sakifo in Réunion island, at Vieilles Charrues and countless others all around Europe. Seven years on, Jamika is considered the sixth member of Zenzile.



Her talent has attracted the attention of other artists including Tony Allen, The Shrine Sound System, Urban Poets and numerous DJ’s who have sought her lyrical wizardry and unique vocal delivery. She was part of the Shrinemania Tour of Uganda and contributed the track «ZZT Girl» on the 2004 EP from El Baron Brissetti.

Never one to be bound by any kind of limits, Jamika considers herself first and foremost an interdisciplinary artist. As a reviewer and critic, she has written for Black Book Review, The Voice, Black Filmmaker Magazine and Straight No Chaser. Her poetry, short stories and essays have been published in several anthologies including «Kin» (Serpent Tail), «Afrakete» (Doubleday, New York) and «Sappho küsst die welt» (Querverlag). She is now in the process of writing her first novel.

As a film and video director, she has produced several notable experimental short films («Shades», «Introduction to Skit-zo-frenia», «Memory tracks») all of which have been screened and won awards at festivals across Europe and the USA. She has also directed a series of short films for Channel 4 in the UK. She even had a cameo in seminal lesbian film «Go Fish» from the American director Rose Troche, now a co-creator of the hit series The L Word.

Bringing together her love of visuals and music, Jamika has delved into mixed media installations, ambitiously fusing live improvised performance. Several of her installations have toured the UK and led to her being selected as a resident artist at Graz in Vienna with her piece Transnarratives.



Born in St Louis Missouri, Jamika has lived in London for ten years, after studying in Chicago and spending time in New York.

*She claims: «I have always considered myself a poet at root and by route, using different media to express the poetic: including spoken word, music, visual arts and the fusion and blending of these different media. I like to blur boundaries of genre and form and draw from all my influences in creating something that is truly an expression of my unique vision.» ».*

That diverse vision finds expression on «Helium Balloon Illusions», the first opus under her own name, which takes a detour off the dub trail to better explore other grooves and rhythms, each one designed to perfectly match the unique mood of each of the ten songs.

«The beat» conjures up Benjamin Zephaniah and the Last Poets. There is a nouvelle hip hop track («Crash») reminiscent of Hanifah Walidah aka Shä-Key with whom she shares numerous preoccupations, strewn with electro incursions, like «Fall of an empire». Be spirited away by «Shanti lift», the first track, and definitely a hit. And «Feed On» would sit perfectly in an English trip hop collection. «Zeus» showcases the strident political activism that has become a trademark. And Jamika's own composition, Travel Bag Blues, is a masterfully sensual modern take on the blues tradition. Most of the album's music is composed by Vince and JC from Zenzile, the others by Jamika herself and Nico Gallard, formerly of LO JO who also worked on RIT's album. The artistic production was entrusted to JC.

A rich and fascinating record and a unique personality is yours to discover live as early as February 2007, when Jamika will be ably supported by Nico Gallard on drums, and EL Baron Brissetti, Laurent Baron and Franck Bergere.

Tempted to take a trip with Jamika? We highly recommend it. Discover a world of depth and sincerity and courage rarely heard in contemporary music with « Helium Balloon Illusions». You'll find yourself exploring those depths again and again. It's personal, it's political. It's an album of the times for these times.

Seb Broquet

[www.jamika.net](http://www.jamika.net)

[www.myspace.com/jamikaajalon](http://www.myspace.com/jamikaajalon)

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

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

### Contacts

**Promotion** : Fred MIGUEL +33(0)6.14.73.62.69  
[oye.mulata@free.fr](mailto:oye.mulata@free.fr)

**Label** : YOTANKA +33(0)6.11.64.33.09  
[mousse@yotanka.net](mailto:mousse@yotanka.net)

**Scène** : 3C - Guillaume Bourreau  
+33(0)2.41.41.78.81  
[guillaume.bourreau@3ctour.com](mailto:guillaume.bourreau@3ctour.com)

**Distribution** : DISCOGRAPH +33(0)1.53.39.18.01  
[disco@discograph.com](mailto:disco@discograph.com)

