

Frédéric Yonnet

REED MY LIPS: THE ROUGH CUT & FINAL MIX

Using an instrument that many have owned but few have mastered, urban jazz harmonicist **Frédéric Yonnet**'s musical skills and stage presence crushes every preconceived notion that you've ever had about the harmonica. For decades, it has primarily served as the instrument of choice for street musicians or loners who chose to express themselves through country or blues. However, in Yonnet's hands, the walls come tumbling down with each track. He presents the harmonica in a refreshing and modern context – as a lead instrument in urban jazz and hip-hop. It's stylish. It's cool. It's brilliant.

As one of the most innovative harmonica players on the international music scene, Yonnet is best known for his strong improvisational skills and ability to play chromatically on a diatonic harmonica. As a result, he has the freedom to stretch a reed traditionally meant for one note into the equivalent of a multi-sound Swiss Army knife. This intense experimentation follows the tradition of great Black harmonicists like **Howlin' Wolf**, **Sonny Boy Williamson**, and **Little Walter**, who revolutionized the harmonica as a Blues instrument during the Great Migration of the 1950s. "The range of sounds that you get from the harmonica is deep and wide. It can sound like a saxophone, a violin, a guitar, or piano. It can make people smile, laugh, and cry. Most importantly, it can make people dream because they aspire to do it too," says **Yonnet**.

Yes, many can play, but few like Yonnet. His impressive style has led to recordings and performances with music legends **Stevie Wonder** and **Prince**, award-winning songwriter **David Foster**, pop-icons, the **Jonas Brothers**, game-changing instrumentalist **Kenny G**, and R&B artists **Erykah Badu**, **Wyclef**, and **John Legend**. *Rolling Stone* magazine referred to Yonnet as "Prince's killer harmonica player" and praise from comedian **Dave Chappelle**, contemporary jazzman **Bob James**, songstress **Patti Austin** and producer **Pharrell Williams** have affirmed his mission to change the way the music industry and enthusiasts regard the pocket-size reed instrument.

There aren't many recording artists who will expose their creative process to fans and critics alike, prior to completing their work, however, that is exactly what **Yonnet** does in his current project, **REED MY LIPS**, a smart blend of contemporary jazz, pop, blues and hip-hop.

In a pioneering effort that leverages technology, art and reality, Yonnet halts all aspects of production – recording, packaging and video – to give fans a snapshot of his work at that very moment in the creative process. The work in progress, subtitled **THE ROUGH CUT**, is available exclusively to fans purchasing digital download cards at live concerts or online at www.fredyonnet.com. A unique code gives users access to **REED MY LIPS: THE ROUGH CUT** files and ultimately **REED MY LIPS: THE FINAL MIX**. Email alerts will announce to purchasers when new materials, i.e. music, art and videos, are available for download. Listeners posting productive comments to the website will have their suggestions considered in the subsequent **REED MY LIPS: THE FINAL MIX**, releasing this later this year and available on iTunes and in a physical CD format.

Yonnet coined the term "Reality CD" to describe the bold concept of allowing fans to observe key phases of the production. "People are curious about the creative process so I decided to make them a part of it at a point when they could actually make a difference," said Yonnet. While many of the tracks have been recorded and a packaging direction conceived, Yonnet still has to make decisions about artwork, guests, background vocals, song titles, etc.

The reality is that fans were constantly asking about the status of the new album and in order to give them an early listen, Yonnet decided to release the draft artwork and music tracks in their evolutionary state despite the fact that it might open up a floodgate of comments. “I realize it’s risky to expose drafts outside of musical circles, and even more risky to encourage feedback, but I welcome it,” said Yonnet. “I’m confident in my work and view all comments as constructive.”

The objective of **Yonnet’s** sonically adventurous third album is twofold. First, it establishes the harmonica as an instrument for the savvy and hip, a revived musical element with a broad palette that can hold its own in any genre of music. Just as the homophone “reed” is taken out of its proper context and placed in a new one, Yonnet takes the harmonica out of its traditional context – blues, country and folk music -- and incorporates it into a more modern sound. Like a “pied piper” of the harmonica, he intends to usher a new generation of harmonic players with him.

The second breakthrough of **REED MY LIPS** is more of a technological feat that offers an innovative way for fans to experience the music and become a part of the creative process. Available via digital download card, **REED MY LIPS: THE ROUGH CUT**, encourages listeners to weigh in on decisions regarding the CD’s artwork, background vocals, special guests, lyrics, track listing, song titles, and album length. In the end, it’s **Yonnet** who will decide whether to incorporate their comments into **THE ROUGH CUT** “I want to turn the people who have been looking forward to this album into active listeners,” says **Yonnet**. “Now, when they listen to the music, particularly the rough cuts, they’ll listen more closely knowing that they can make a difference.”

Yonnet collaborates on **REED MY LIPS** with New York production team **nVMe** and Washington, DC-based producer **Sean Miles** to feature the harmonica as the lead voice on beats laced with jazz, hip-hop and R&B. “Yonnet’s sound is stunning,” said nVMe’s **Mesta Bish**. “Neither he nor the harmonica can be contained in a box.” The album’s bold, aggressive and head-bobbing rhythms signal not only that Yonnet wants to play; with **REED MY LIPS** he clearly has something to say.