



DJ

Gumia Robinson is a DJ and a former producer of youth entertainment TV in Rwanda

Gumia, when did you first start as a DJ?

I started DJing when I was a student in 1995 and started performing gigs in Rwanda in 1997- in clubs, on the radio. I was like a pioneer DJ in Rwanda, my lifestyle was like a catharsis- part of the healing process for youths after the war.

So your career took off quite quickly?

There wasn't a lot of entertainment at the time and my music program was a good thing. From 1997 until 2000 I produced a youth entertainment TV program, called "Steps" on "TV Rwanda". We had music, social discussion in English and Kinyarwanda. Then things didn't go so well and I had to leave Rwanda.

For a few years I worked as a DJ in jazz clubs and radio stations in southern Africa. In that time I was exposed to great DJs there, like DJ Fresh and DJ Surge from South Africa, who do international gigs in Ibiza and Miami.

During that time I mastered new techniques of "turntablism" and digital audio looping. I learnt to be a beatmaker with an audio production company called "World of Music".

I was producing and writing for www.africanhiphop.com and a show on Radio 4 FM in Arusha in Tanzania

What's a "beatmaker"

A beatmaker is someone who makes a beat - an audio soundtrack for a singer to sing over the top of. I produce them using "fruityloops", some free to download software.

So what is happening now you are in the UK?

I'm exposing my sound on Myspace. My site is pretty busy and I've made friends around the world. I have a good rapport with DJs, musicians and producers round the UK who visit my site. I have about 250 friends on my site.

[\(Check out Gumia's site\)](#)

Does that feel good?

It feels great. I rarely think about asylum when I am on Myspace because the musicians and companies I am in touch with there give me solace, friends and there are some great characters. They don't know about my asylum status here. They see me as an accomplished artist and treat me with respect.

I get lots of contacts saying "can you do a song with me" or "can you do a beat for me".

So you get offered work?

Yes, I get offered work but I can't be paid for it because asylum seekers are not allowed to work. So I've gone and done some gigs for free. But I've decided now I will ask people to donate my fee to charities working with kids and elderly people in Leeds and Dewsbury.

What's life like for you in the UK?

Living in a foreign land you seek friendship so you offer your hosts your most delightful side. That's enabled me to make friends. As a journalist, with political affiliations, people don't take that as fun. Entertainment has helped me to survive where I can.

Now in the UK I'm learning how to give people advice and support by volunteering with the Refugee Council in Leeds. The system in the UK is difficult for people seeking help, there are tough conditions. I've learnt to accept whatever is at hand and focus my mind on things that make me happy- like composing music, playing gigs, meeting people socially. I've had a good experience with locals here. When you present yourself well, they smile back.
