



Tippa Irie - BIOGRAPHY

Few artists have shaped the identity of UK reggae and dancehall as profoundly as **Tippa Irie**. Rising to prominence in the 1980s as a leading MC on the legendary **Saxon Sound system**, Tippa Irie became synonymous with fast-chatting — a rapid, rhythmic vocal style that demanded lyrical skill, breath control, and sharp wit. His voice, delivery, and personality quickly made him a standout figure on sound systems and recordings alike, **helping to establish a distinctly British chapter in reggae and dancehall history.**

The Early Years

Anthony Henry —better known as Tippa Irie—was born in Brixton UK to Jamaican parents from Trelawny. Tippa was raised within the UK's vibrant sound system culture where he started his musical career on his father's Sound System called **Musical Messiah**. Family members soon realized that young Tippa had immense talent and encouraged him to enter local talent competitions, which he began winning early on. Local sound systems recognized his charismatic talent and started asking him to perform on their sound systems. At the age of 17, Tippa recorded his **first record 'The Opposite' with Sir Lloyd** on the LGR record label. Shortly after, Tippa was asked to join **King Tubby's Sound**. He stayed with King Tubby's for a couple of years before being spotted by Dennis Rowe and Lloyd Francis from Saxon Sound System, who were blown away by Tippa's talent. They quickly asked him to join Saxon Sound.

The 1980s and Sound System Culture

Saxon Sound System became the forefront of the UK Reggae and Dancehall scene helping to launch the careers of Maxi Priest, Papa Levi, Smiley Culture, Tippa's sister Miss Irie, Daddy Colonel, Daddy Rusty, Roger Robin, and Peter King—who created the fast-talking style that made Saxon MC's recognized worldwide. The Saxon sessions were recorded on cassette tapes which played on underground radio and started circulating around the world. As these tapes circulated, Saxon's popularity grew. Tippa and Saxon became famous in every corner of the world, including Africa and Jamaica. Major record labels including Virgin, Greensleeves, and Island Records, became interested in the Saxon artists.

Tippa developed his craft at a time when MCs were expected to command crowds through both lyricism and presence. His sharp tongue, comedic timing, and fearless engagement with audiences set him apart. That combination carried him beyond the underground with the release of his **first solo album "Is It Really Happening To Me" in 1986**. His debut album saw several UK top hits, including **'Complain Neighbor'** and **'It's Good to Have the Feeling You're the Best.'** The album reached a historic moment when his tune **'Hello Darling'** reached number one on the UK Reggae Chart and crossed over into the mainstream reaching No. 22 on the UK Singles Charts

where it spent several months— a breakthrough that signaled a cultural shift and opened doors for generations to follow.

1990s Breakthrough & Global Rise to the Grammys

The 1990s marked another golden era for Tippa Irie, delivering smash hits and genre-defining collaborations. Teaming with Mad Professor, he unleashed the critically acclaimed *'Rebel on the Roots Corne'r*—lyrically dense and still a fan favorite today. An ardent Arsenal supporter, he charted in the UK Top 30 with *'Shouting for the Gunners'*, while his duet with Lloyd Brown, *'It's a Love Thing'*, hit **#1 on the UK Reggae charts**. As we crossed into the 2000s, Tippa's prowess drew collaborators worldwide across musical genres. In 2005, he earned a **GRAMMY® nomination for Best Rap Song**, penning and performing *'Hey Mama'* with will.i.am of Black Eyed Peas. This prestigious honor led to Tippa touring the world with the Black Eyed Peas and performing on some of the biggest stages in the world. After his Grammy hit, he shared stages and studios with Maxi Priest, Pato Banton, Jurassic 5, UB40, Aswad, Congo Natty, and more. The 2010s amplified Tippa Irie's name further with the release of *Stick to My Roots*, a standout album on his Lockdown Productions label. His production company also released the internationally loved UK Flu compilation in 2012 featuring artists including Maxi Priest, JC Lodge, Nadirah X, and others. In 2016, *"Living the Dream"* struck gold, blending Reggae, Dancehall, Soca, Hip-Hop, Pop, and Afro Beat with guests like Peter Hunnigale and General Levy.

Recent Triumphs

His 2022 release and 18th career album "I'm an African", spanned socio-political depth and dancehall joy amid a massive European tour—headlining Edinburgh Jazz Fest, Lewisham People's Day, Rototom, and beyond. 2023 saw Tippa venture into new territory as he became a published author with the **release of his autobiography titled 'Stick To My Roots'**, named after his 2010 hit single of the same name. His autobiography claimed **#1 spots on several Amazon UK bestseller** lists and continues to be highly acclaimed.

Across more than 40 years, Tippa Irie has remained consistent in both output and integrity. Not afraid to reinvent himself and venture into new musical genres, his lyrics balance humor with insight, entertainment with message, and tradition with innovation. Whether addressing social themes, celebrating culture, or simply controlling the microphone with speed and precision, his style remains unmistakable. Equally respected for his live performances, Tippa is known as an engaging and often hilarious performer, capable of turning any stage — from sound clash settings to festival crowds — into a shared experience. In recent years, he has placed renewed emphasis on full band performances, bringing greater musical depth to his shows while still delivering the high-energy PA sets that made his name.

His latest project scheduled for release later in 2026 sees Tippa Irie returning to Jamaica to record new music with the legendary King Jammys, reinforcing a direct connection to the roots of the culture that shaped him. His new music reflects an artist grounded in experience and still driven by lyrical excellence. To date, Tippa remains one of the most successful entertainers to come out of the UK and continues to fly the flag for the UK scene wherever he goes. Tippa splits his time between London and Jamaica.

To learn more about Tippa Irie, or inquire about an appearance, check out www.tippairie.com