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## Departure

# Tiago Grade, New York

ON SEP 1, 2015 IN [DEPARTURE](#) | 0 COMMENTS

There's no stopping the unbeatable music box that is Tiago Grade, aka Rizumik. A bona fide Lisboner, full-time beatboxer and aspiring tap dancer in his spare time, he is an artist looking for his place in the sun in frenetic New York.



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### MY NEW YORK IS GREEN

Forget Brooklyn, forget Soho, Downtown or the Upper East Side. Tiago's top three in New York is green. Starting with Central Park, where the beatboxer particularly likes Strawberry Fields, Sheep Meadow, with its vast lawn from where you can spot skyscrapers above the treetops, and Rumsey Playfield, where (especially in the summer) you can enjoy great concerts for free – “that's where I saw the Cape Verdean Mayra Andrade a few months ago”. But he has more favourite parks! There's Cloisters in northern Manhattan, “a lovely park where you'll find the no less interesting museum of medieval art”, and the original High Line Park (between Chelsea and the Meatpacking District): “A hanging garden along a disused railway line where there are artistic touches and performances aplenty.”



## THE GOURMAND ROUTE

Any foodie worth his salt will never say 'no' to any type of cuisine, from the most conventional to the most exotic. Tiago's gastronomic choices in New York do not include sophisticated restaurants but are more centred on the "cheap and cheerful". The Thai restaurant Pam Real Thai is one of them: "the service is great and so is the quality/price relation." Sushi is at Asuka, "which has delicious combinations." And as for the best hamburgers in New York, there is the original burger at 5 Napkin Burger: "with Gruyere cheese, caramelised onions and rosemary aioli; it's very good!"

Pam Real Thai \ [www.pamrealthai.com](http://www.pamrealthai.com)

Asuka Sushi \ [www.asukasushi23.com](http://www.asukasushi23.com)

5 Napkin Burguer \ [www.5napkinburger.com](http://www.5napkinburger.com)

## PLAY

City of the arts. City of music. New York is a world of infinite possibilities for music lovers. The greatest theatre productions and musicals are on Broadway; all great shows make their way to this city and there is a lot, but a lot of talent to be found in the streets, bars and less crowded concert halls. One of the places where Tiago likes to go in search of good music and inspiration is the Rockwood Music Hall: "It has many concert halls and its programme is always jam-packed with loads of options. In one night, you can enjoy quite a few concerts. And for free – you only pay for refreshments."

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



At the age of 10, Tiago asked his parents for a drum kit, but luck wasn't on his side. So "to make the best of the situation", he decided to start reproducing the full sound spectrum of bass drums, snare drums and cymbals with his voice, nose and mouth. Unintentionally – and unknowingly – he was slowly making his way into the then little-known world of beatboxing. Since then much has changed, not only in the art of reproducing sounds with one's voice, but also in Tiago's life. While beatboxing went from being anonymous to well-known, he also went from being a young Advertising and Marketing graduate jumping from company to company to a full-time artist.

The transition happened in 2011 when Tiago was working in Macau for a communications company under the Inov Contacto programme. "I had planned to do a 6-month internship in Macau and to invest in my artistic career when I returned to Portugal." As fate would have it, Tiago was packing his bags three months later and leaving the Orient and his desk job behind for New York's Off-Broadway stages. Tiago had got an offer he could not refuse from the Israeli musical theatre group Voca People, which recreates *a cappella* versions of rock and pop hits. Months after having arrived in the US, Tiago – whose stage name is Rizumik – made the most of this momentum and entered the American beatboxing championship, which he won hands down.

The show ran for a year in New York, followed by several performances abroad. During the lull in tours there was time for other things, like "learning tap dance, which has always fascinated me", and for embarking on new collaborations and projects – such as his teaming up with the Los Angeles group Urban Method, and the original vocal DJ set *Mount Kimusha*, where together with New Orleans singer Sasha Masakowski, he gives free rein to improvisation. And now taking its first steps is the group FuseJam, which Tiago and three colleagues from Voca People hope will set social networks on fire. A groove-filled *a cappella* medley of 21 Madonna hits is already available online.

## **From NY to LX**

So far, Tiago has lived in four cities – Lisbon, Barcelona, Macau and New York – and interestingly he didn't choose any of them; instead they popped up in his path. Are there other places where he could see himself living? Maybe not. Obviously, as a curious and avid traveller he wouldn't mind spending time in Argentina or India, "to learn new rhythms". "But, honestly, I don't know if there are many places in the world where my way of expressing myself artistically would be as successful as it is here in New York. Perhaps only in London or Australia," he explains. "Some say that you either love or hate New York, and I've already experienced both feelings. At times I have felt

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more accompanied, and other times more alone; sometimes more and other times less integrated. But on the whole I love New York,” he adds. And he is not scared by the fact that he is in one of the cities with the greatest number of artists like him. The intensity of the city, its cosmopolitan side and the fact that there’s always something happening are the three things this honorary New Yorker likes the most. “If there’s one thing that I love to do no matter where I am, it’s to watch people – I think there’s a bit of a psycho-sociologist in me – and New York is the perfect place for that.”

Although New York has a whole lot to offer, Tiago misses his family and friends (whom he talks to via Skype), as well as the food, the Mediterranean climate and fantastic places such as Belém, Lisbon’s Bairro Alto and Sintra. “I also miss driving (I don’t have a car here) and the *modus operandi* of our culture and our people.” Despite being close to one of the largest Portuguese communities in the world – in Newark and New Jersey – Tiago hardly ever participates in Portuguese festivities and reunions. “When I feel homesick, I prefer to visit Portugal in person,” he says. “I go back home once or twice a year and I manage to stay there long enough to see my family, friends and the places that I like.” And there’s more! He always gets to take to the stage with the Rizumik Trio (which brings together beatboxing, the didgeridoo and the saxophone) “with Portuguese DJs, musicians and dancers who challenge me to do some improvisation. In the end, I always have a very busy schedule in Portugal.”

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by **Maria Ana Ventura**