



Famous French People

Cabu ©

by Robert Shepherd

Hello, you're listening to EnglishWaves and this is Robert Shepherd with more Famous French.

We're about to look at the life of a gifted cartoonist who was described by the filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard as "the best journalist in France." He was also the father of the French singer/songwriter Mano Solo.

Sadly, his life was tragically ended in January 2015, when terrorists indiscriminately shot dead members of staff at the offices of the satirical publication *Charlie Hebdo*. He is Jean Cabut, or better known by his *nom de plume*, "Cabu".

Born in Châlons-en-Champagne on 13th January 1938, Cabu studied art at the École Estienne in Paris. His first drawings were published as early as 1954 in a local newspaper.

However, Cabu's fledgling career was slowed down when the Algerian War forced him to be conscripted to the army for over two years. However, his talent was still put to good use – Cabu drew for the army magazine *Bled* and *Paris Match*.

It has been said Cabu's time in the armed forces turned him into a vocal anti-militarist and he adopted a slightly anarchistic view of society.

Meanwhile, he continued drawing political caricatures for *Charlie Hebdo* and *Le Canard Enchaîné*. He created popular characters, such as *Le Grand Duduche*, *Adjudant Kronenbourg*, and *Mon Beauf*. In fact, *Mon Beauf* was so accurate as the average, racist, sexist, vulgar, ordinary Frenchman that the word *beauf* – short for "*beau-frère*" – is common parlance.

Although some of Cabu's depictions sailed close to the wind, it wasn't until February 2006 when he courted serious controversy. One of his cartoons appeared on the cover of *Charlie Hebdo* – in response to the Danish cartoons affair – and it spawned a lawsuit. The illustration depicted the Muslim prophet Muhammad under the caption "Muhammad overwhelmed by fundamentalists".

Nevertheless, from September 2006 to January 2007, an exhibition entitled *Cabu and Paris* was organised at the Paris City Hall.

Cabu was shot dead, along with seven of his colleagues, two police officers, and two others, on 7th January 2015 when gunmen stormed the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in Paris. It happened just days before his 77th birthday.

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