

Africa Roots Revisited

Since first emerging on the indie label Sublime Frequencies in 2010 as the leader of Group Bombino, guitarist Omara "Bombino" Moctar from Niger has bounced between labels and producers, working at home and in the United States. But in a quest to connect his Saharan blues style with rock fans, he paired up with Black Keys mastermind Dan Auerbach for **Nomad (Nonesuch 534291; 40:25 ★★★½)**, which cushions his lacerating licks with deep organ-driven soul-blues grooves. The clapping, cycling rhythms of the Tuareg remains, and Bombino's parched, nasal singing is straight out of the desert, but the wide-open production makes a good fit, complementing without erasing the guitarist's heritage.

Ordering info: nonesuch.com

Sékouba "Bambino" Diabaté is a long way from his roots as the singer of the legendary Bembeya Jazz during the '80s on **The Griot's Craft (Sterns 1117; 49:49 ★★★)**, a modern Guinean roots-pop record. His deeply soulful voice is supported by a largely acoustic blend of guitar, balafon, ngoni, kora, hand percussion and a female chorus, and while it breaks no new ground, few practitioners of contemporary Mande music can touch his mastery. The arrangements and production style recall the early '90s sound of singers like Senegal's Baaba Maal and Mali's Salif Keita.

Ordering info: sternsmusic.com

On previous records Senegal's Nuru Kane has demonstrated a border-crossing sensibility, ingeniously incorporating the Gnawan twang of the guimbri into his music. On his third album, **Exile (Riverboat 1068; 43:14 ★★★½)**, the France-based singer keeps that trance-oriented sound in the mix, but elsewhere he opens the stylistic floodgates, adding in hip-hop rapping, reggae, flamenco, chanson and blues—here and there he sounds like a Senegalese Manu Chao. Kane has enough charisma and vocal chops to pull it off here and there, but that doesn't mean he exhibits much vision or identity. This is the kind of sound that actually deserves the execrable tag "world music."

Ordering info: worldmusic.net

Kassidat: Raw 45s From Morocco (Dust-To-Digital 2004; 34:31 ★★★½) vibrantly surveys six different musical approaches from the post-colonial heyday of the nation's homegrown record industry from the late '50s to the early '60s, including the driving syncopation of Mohamed Bergam's chaabi song "Zine Mlih" and the local adaption of the rai from neighboring Algeria performed by Abdellah el Magana on "Kassidat El Hakka." The



Sékouba "Bambino" Diabaté

JIM MCGUIRE

vinyl-only collection includes excellent liner notes describing the characteristics of each stylistic variant and the creative outburst unleashed after the country achieved independence from France.

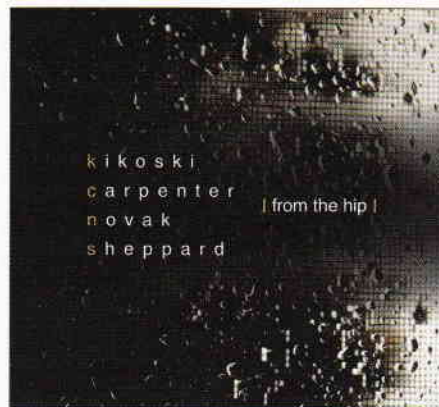
Ordering info: dust-digital.com

The music on **Volume 5 (Awesome Tapes From Africa; 57:42 ★★★)** by Somalia's Dur-Dur Band was made during the '80s, a more prosperous and peaceful era in the country's brutal and beleaguered recent history. The group borrowed plenty from commercial American r&b and the ever-influential Bob Marley, but its root sound was derived from native pentatonic harmonies and hypnotic melodic shapes, and it's hard to miss the similarities to music made in nearby Sudan. All of Dur-Dur Band's releases were cassette-only, and since that was the source for this reissue of incredibly hard-to-find music, the sound quality is a bit murky, but the actual recording is rich in detail and depth, to say nothing of its soulfulness.

Ordering info: awesometapes.com

Against all odds producer Samy Ben Redjeb has unearthed more gems from Benin legends Orchestre Poly-Rythme De Cotonou on **The Skeletal Essences Of Voodoo Funk (Analog Africa 073; 67:26 ★★★)**, the third in a series of reissues of the group's music. None of the 14 tracks have ever been available outside of Africa and the general vibe here recalls the exploration of native vodoun rhythms the first volume focused upon. The band's irresistible blend of tart, punchy horns, percolating organ riffs and lean guitar funk include steamroller grooves sculpted by bassist Gustave Benthoo and drummer Leopold Yehouessi. The collection may not prove as revelatory as its predecessors, but there's no qualitative letdown. Essential stuff. **DB**

Ordering info: forcedexposure.com



Dave Kikoski/Dave Carpenter/ Gary Novak/Bob Sheppard From The Hip

BFM JAZZ 848129065230

★★★★

Longstanding Mingus Big Band member Dave Kikoski is well-known for his blazing chops and inventive harmonic and rhythmic extrapolation in whatever setting he finds himself. On this quartet outing, the pianist takes some liberties on a set of familiar standards while remaining faithful to the engaging melodies. Joined by a talented West Coast crew of tenor saxophonist Bob Sheppard, the late Dave Carpenter on upright bass and Gary Novak on drums, Kikoski tweaks the proceedings with his renegade comping while the rhythm tandem of Carpenter and Novak more than adequately hold down the fort.

Sheppard showcases his technique on the opener, "Star Eyes," while Kikoski reinvents the harmonic fabric of the piece on his probing piano solo. Their stirring rendition of "My One and Only Love," a wonderful showcase for Sheppard's underrated tenor playing, along with interpretations of "How Deep Is The Ocean" and "If You Could See Me Now," are equally rewarding.

Other highlights on this copasetic quartet outing include a soothing rendition of Toninho Horta's samba ballad "From Ton To Tom," with Sheppard switching to soprano sax, along with spirited renditions of Chick Corea's jauntily swinging "Tones For Joan's Bones" and John Coltrane's imposing "Mr. P.C.," which opens with an introspective piano solo by Kikoski before the whole band kicks into overdrive. Kikoski definitely channels McCoy Tyner on his killer solo here. And for sheer burn there's "Autumn Leaves," which has Kikoski extrapolating on the theme with his uncanny facility while nonchalantly dropping in a quote from "Suicide Is Painless" ("Theme To 'M.A.S.H.'").

A rare live outing for Carpenter, who passed away not long after this 2006 session, *From The Hip* is the sound of four stellar musicians dealing.

—Bill Milkowski

From the Hip: Star Eyes; From Ton To Tom; Bolivia; My One And Only Love; How Deep Is The Ocean; If You Could See Me Now; Autumn Leaves; Tones For Joan's Bones; Mr. P.C. (66:00)

Personnel: Dave Kikoski, piano; Dave Carpenter, bass; Gary Novak, drums; Bob Sheppard, saxophones.

Ordering info: bfmjazz.com