

MUSICROUGH GUIDES

THE ROUGH GUIDE to

# Psychedelic Africa

The 1960s and 1970s across Africa were decades defined by bright optimism and clashing sensibilities. As newly independent countries grappled to assert fresh identities, politicized youth movements bristled against authority. Rapid urbanization challenged the traditions and hierarchies of old, and the Europeanized urban elite collided with pioneers of 'back to roots' movements. Music plunged through the heart of this dynamic time and was a powerful tool of expression. Far-out psychedelic-sounding rock mixed with a thick dollop of deep funk and soul became the sound of a generation. The music was cosmopolitan, rebellious and deeply cool all at the same time.

This album features some hand-picked gems from the archive, and includes tracks by unstoppable psychedelic veterans Ebo Taylor and Orchestre Poly-Rythmo, who are still releasing top-quality mind-bending grooves today.

In the 1960s across Africa, trendy urbanites sported Italian clothes, pointy shoes and dapper hairstyles, styling themselves after the popular spaghetti westerns that dominated the film industry. Soon cowboy style was to fuse with the soul-hippy movement that was emanating from California, and the eponymous flared trouser began to appear, as did the trippy echoing guitars, crunching sustained chords and wozy melody lines synonymous with the music of Jimi Hendrix

and his contemporaries. Super-cool scenesters addressed one another as 'Jack Toronto' or 'Santana Man', street nicknames alluding to their American-inspired cowboy fashion and hip taste in music.

During the 1960s and 1970s, several legendary American soul and funk musicians performed in Africa. These visits had a huge impact on the youth, a generation who were captivated by icons such as James Brown and Tina Turner: artists who were asserting a new 'cool', one that was liberated, international and – significantly, after decades of dreaded colonialism – black and proud. One such seminal gig took place in Ghana in 1971. The West African country celebrated its fourteenth anniversary of independence with the 'Soul to Soul' festival, a mammoth fourteen-hour gig with a truly stellar line-up. Roberta Flack, Mavis Staples, Wilson Pickett, Ike and Tina Turner and Carlos Santana all took to the stage, alongside some of the best Ghanaian acts of the day, such as Kwaa Mensah and the Psychedelic Aliens. Similar events were held across the continent, including 'Zaire 74', featuring performances from James Brown, Bill Withers, B.B. King, Miriam Makeba, TPOK Jazz and Tabu Ley Rochereau. Evidently, during the 1960s and 1970s, imported American funk and the Latin-rock music of Santana was hugely popular. As the music took hold across Africa, different artists began to derive their own original takes on the genre, fusing American music with traditional

arts, and with popular African styles such as highlife, Congolese soukous, and Afro-beat.

Several of the tracks on this Rough Guide are from West Africa and bear the discernible influence of highlife. Highlife originated in Ghana in the early twentieth century and is based upon a fusion of American jazz rhythms with African roots music. Originally dance orchestras played the music to entertain the colonial elite in posh clubs along the coast, thus garnering the nickname 'high-life', pertaining to the music's association with high-class events. By the 1950s, highlife – played by smaller guitar bands and promoted by the seminal group E.T. Mensah and The Tempos – was massively popular.

On this Rough Guide Nigerian guitar maestro Sir Victor Uwaifo employs the sweet harmonies and gently lilting textures of highlife, mixed with echoing horns and distorted guitar lines, resulting in a heady psychedelic brew. His seminal track 'Guitar Boy', included on this album, was a huge hit in 1966. Uwaifo explained the subject of the song as recounting an encounter he had with a river spirit, Mami Wata, on a beach in Lagos, Nigeria. A man of many stripes (he was also a bodybuilder, and is now a university professor and respected sculptor), Uwaifo was the first African to receive a gold recording disc, indicating his seismic significance. His live performances were bombastic, often featuring acrobatics or Uwaifo playing the guitar with

his tongue. Celestine Ukwu's gentle track 'Obialu Be Onye Abiagbunia Okwukwe' also includes a highlife groove, played at a laid-back tempo and teasingly interspersed with swooping, bent notes played on a pedal steel guitar. Nigerian trumpeter and bandleader Victor Olaiya started his career in a highlife band called Cool Cats. The band was known to borrow melodies from Ghanaian highlife and add Yoruba words. Drawing upon a more soul-funk sound, Olaiya's next band, the All Stars, branded their own unique concoction of psychedelic highlife and set about recording a set of excellent tracks. On 'Let Yourself Go', Olaiya rasps and growls his vocals above tightly stacked horn lines that, along with the percussion, pound out a straight-ahead groove.

East African psychedelic music often has a darker, jazzier feel, inferred from the use of traditional modes and harmonies. Hailing from Ethiopia, Alèmayèhu Eshètè's music is brooding Ethio-jazz with a splash of psychedelia in the form of a winding high-pitched guitar, a booming amplified bass line and interjecting keyboard figures. On 'Eruq Yaleshew', Alèmayèhu's voice is heavily melismatic, sliding from one note to another. The timbre of his voice is low and rich, and he adds in occasional pants and heavy breathing that are reminiscent of James Brown's infamous vocal techniques. The Milmani Park Orchestra are a *muzik wa dansi* band from Tanzania. Their sound fused together highlife,

American funk and Congolese soukous – the latter imbuing the music with an Afro-Cuban edge that is also manifest in the music of many of the West African bands heard on this album, such as Orchestra Baobab and Balla Et Ses Balladins.

Recent years have seen a resurgence in interest in funky psychedelic-sounding African music, allowing several (now middle-aged) musicians to successfully re-launch their careers on the contemporary 'world music' scene. The Senegalese band Orchestra Baobab reformed in 2001 and re-released their 1989 album, *Pirates Choice*. Their (now retro) sound continues to fill dance floors once again, and the band have readily reclaimed their top slot in the pantheon of African pop. The Beninese band Orchestre Poly-Rythmo are also old hands on the scene, and have been steadily delivering their unique brand of Vodun-funk for decades. As the 2011 track 'Pardon', featured on this album, demonstrates, they are still fantastic performers who are showing no signs of slowing down. Now in his mid-seventies Ghanaian guitarist Ebo Taylor wowed critics with his recent album, *Love And Death*. Although a long time star in his home country, his 2011 album was his first ever international release. 'Nga Nga' heard on this Rough Guide, is based upon a Ghanaian nursery rhyme and features thick, stubborn brass riffs, floating guitars and Ebo's ever powerful vocals. His music whips up and reinvigorates multiple

influences, and this time invokes a distinctly Afro-beat flavour.

The psychedelic zeitgeist worldwide was always about experimentation and liberation. The artists on this Rough Guide pushed, pulled and ripped their music apart in order to build it back up and create exciting fusions. They made new sounds, ones that could accurately assert the identity of a defiant generation – a generation who wanted, and deserved, to be counted as modern, urban and creative citizens of the world. That this music still sounds so effortlessly cool, and is still packing out concert halls worldwide, is great testament to the power of the movement.

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L'Afrique des années 1960 et 1970 est marquée par l'optimisme et la collision des sensibilités. Alors que des pays ayant récemment conquis leur indépendance affirment des identités nouvelles, des mouvements de jeunesse politisés affrontent l'autorité. Une urbanisation rapide met en cause les traditions et les hiérarchies de l'ancien monde, et l'élite européenne urbaine heurte les pionniers des mouvements de «retour aux racines». La musique a plongé au cœur de cette époque dynamique et a été un puissant outil d'expression. Un rock aux résonances psychédélics et géniales, mélangé avec une bonne dose de deep funk, est devenu le son d'une génération. Cette musique était à la fois cosmopolite, rebelle et profondément

cool.

Ainsi, le *Rough Guide To Psychedelic Africa* contient quelques perles soigneusement récoltées dans les archives, et comprend des pistes des vétérans psychédélics imparables Ebo Taylor et l'Orchestre Poly-Rythmo, qui produisent encore aujourd'hui des groove hallucinants.

Dans les années 1960, les citadins branchés de toute l'Afrique arboraient des vêtements italiens, des chaussures pointues et des coiffures soignées, imitant eux-mêmes le style populaire des westerns spaghetti occidentaux qui dominait alors l'industrie du cinéma. Le style cow-boy a fusionné par la suite avec le mouvement hippy-soul né en Californie, et le pantalon évasé éponyme a commencé à apparaître, tout comme les guitares aux sonorités délirantes, les accords aux crissemments soutenus et les lignes mélodiques vertigineuses typiques de Jimi Hendrix et de ses contemporains. Des fêtards super-cool se faisaient appeler «Jack Toronto» ou «Man Santana», allusions à leur mode inspirée des cow-boys américains et à leur goût pour la musique branchée.

Dans les années 1960 et 1970, plusieurs musiciens américains soul et funk légendaires se sont produits en Afrique. Ces visites ont eu un impact énorme sur les jeunes Africains, une génération fascinée par des icônes comme James Brown et

Tina Turner: des artistes qui affirmaient une nouvelle génération «cool», libérée, internationale et - après des décennies de peur, liée au colonialisme – *black and proud* (fière et noire). En Afrique de l'Ouest, le Ghana a accueilli un de ces concerts marquants en 1971 et célébré le quatorzième anniversaire de son indépendance avec le festival «Soul to Soul», une gigantesque série de concerts durant quatorze heures, rassemblant de nombreuses stars. Roberta Flack, Mavis Staples, Wilson Pickett, Ike et Tina Turner, et Carlos Santana sont tous montés sur la scène, aux côtés de certains des meilleurs musiciens ghanéens, comme Kwaa Mensah et les Psychedelic Aliens. Des événements similaires ont eu lieu sur tout le continent, tel «Zaire 74», auquel participèrent notamment James Brown, Bill Withers, B. B. King, Miriam Makeba, TPOK Jazz et Tabu Ley Rochereau. Evidemment, pendant les années 1960 et 1970, le funk américain ou la musique latino-rock de Santana importés étaient très populaires. Alors que cette musique se diffusait en Afrique, différents artistes ont commencé à s'en inspirer pour créer leur propre style, mélangeant la musique américaine avec les arts traditionnels et les styles africains populaires tels que le highlife, le soukous congolais et l'afro-beat.

Plusieurs des titres de ce *Rough Guide* viennent d'Afrique de l'Ouest et l'on peut y percevoir l'influence du highlife, un style apparu au Ghana au début du XXe siècle et

fondé sur une fusion entre des rythmes de jazz américain et des musiques traditionnelles africaines. A l'origine, les orchestres de danse jouaient pour divertir l'élite coloniale dans les clubs huppés de la côte, et il a été dit qu'ils menaient «grande vie (*highlife*)», car la musique était associée à des événements de la haute société. Dans les années 1950, le *highlife* - joué par de plus petits groupes de guitares et promu par l'orchestre capital E.T. Mensah & The Tempos - a connu une grande popularité.

Dans ce *Rough Guide*, le maestro nigérian de la guitare, Sir Victor Uwaifo, emploie les harmonies douces et les textures délicatement chantantes du *highlife*, qu'il mélange avec des cors et des lignes de guitare déformées: il en résulte un breuvage psychédélique enivrant. Sa piste 'Boy Guitar', qui a fait école, figure dans cette compilation. Elle a connu un énorme succès en 1966. Uwaifo a expliqué que la chanson racontait sa rencontre avec un esprit du fleuve, Mami Wata, sur une plage de Lagos, au Nigeria. Homme ecclésiastique (il pratiquait le *bodybuilding* et est maintenant professeur d'université et sculpteur respecté), Uwaifo était le premier Africain à recevoir un disque d'or, récompense qui indique son importance sismique. Ses performances live étaient grandioses: elles comportaient souvent des acrobaties ou voyaient Uwaifo jouer de la guitare avec sa langue. Le doux titre 'Obialu Be Onye Abiagbunia Okwukwe' par Celestine Ukwu comprend également un

groove *highlife*, interprété à un tempo modéré et entrecoupé d'un flot de notes jouées à la *pedal steel guitar*. Victor Olaiya, trompettiste et chef d'orchestre nigérian, a commencé sa carrière dans un groupe *highlife* baptisé les Cool Cats. Le groupe était connu pour emprunter des mélodies au *highlife* ghanéen et y ajouter des mots en *yoruba*. S'appuyant sur un son davantage soul-funk sonore, le groupe suivant d'Olaiya, les All Stars, présente une concoction unique de *highlife* psychédélique et un ensemble d'excellents morceaux. Sur 'Let Yourself Go', Olaiya grogne et lance sa voix au-dessus de plusieurs lignes de cor qui, avec les percussions, forment un groove irrésistible.

La musique psychédélique d'Afrique de l'Est est souvent plus sombre et plus jazzy, en raison de l'utilisation des modes et harmonies traditionnels. Originaire d'Éthiopie, la musique d'Alèmayèhu Eshètè couvre l'éthio-jazz d'une touche de psychédéisme provenant d'une guitare perchée dans les aigus, d'une ligne de basse amplifiée saisissante et de l'interposition du clavier. Sur 'Eruq Yaleshe', la voix Alèmayèhu est fortement mélismatique, glissant d'une note à l'autre. Le timbre en est faible et riche, et il ajoute parfois un halètement et une respiration lourde qui rappellent les tristement célèbres techniques vocales de James Brown. Quant aux Milmani Park Orchestra, ensemble de *muzik wa dansi* tanzanien, leur son a opéré la fusion du *highlife*, du funk américain et du soukous

congolais - ce dernier imprégnant la musique d'une touche afro-cubaine qui se manifeste également dans la musique de nombreux orchestres d'Afrique de l'Ouest retenus dans ce *Rough Guide*, comme Orchestra Baobab et Balla Et Ses Balladins.

Récemment, la musique africaine psychédélique et funky a connu un regain d'intérêt, permettant à plusieurs musiciens (actuellement d'âge mur) de relancer leur carrière sur la scène contemporaine de 'world music'. L'ensemble sénégalais Orchestra Baobab s'est reformé en 2001 et a réédité son album de 1989, *Pirates Choice*. Son son (maintenant rétro) remplit de nouveau les salles de danse, et l'orchestre a facilement retrouvé sa place au sommet du panthéon de la pop africaine. Les membres du groupe béninois Orchestre Poly-Rythmo sont d'autres vieux briscards de la scène, qui, depuis des décennies, continuent de délivrer leur funk-vaudou très original. Comme le montre le titre 'Pardon' de 2011, qui figure sur cet album, ces artistes sont toujours fantastiques et ne montrent aucun signe de fatigue. Âgé aujourd'hui d'environ 75 ans, le guitariste ghanéen Ebo Taylor a séduit les critiques avec son récent album, intitulé *Love And Death*. Connus depuis longtemps dans son pays d'origine, il a obtenu avec cet album sa première reconnaissance internationale. 'Nga Nga', choisi pour cette compilation, est basé sur une comptine ghanéenne et allie les riffs de cuivres têtus et épais aux guitares

flottantes et à la voix toujours puissante d'Ebo. Sa musique fouette et revigore des influences multiples, et à cette fois une saveur distincte d'afro-beat.

Dans le monde entier, l'état d'esprit psychédélique a toujours été synonyme d'expérimentation et de libération. Les artistes présents sur ce *Rough Guide* ont poussé, tiré et arraché leur musique hors des sentiers battus, afin de la reconstruire et de créer d'excitantes mélanges. Ils ont créé de nouvelles sonorités, susceptibles d'affirmer l'identité d'une génération rebelle - une génération qui a voulu, et mérité, d'être considérée comme rassemblant les citoyens modernes, urbains et créatifs du monde. Que cette musique sonne si cool, et ce sans effort, et qu'elle rassemble encore des foules dans les salles de concert du monde entier, témoigne de la puissance du mouvement.

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**VICTOR OLAIYA** - Known as the 'Evil Genius of Highlife', Olaiya's music can rightly be seen as the link between highlife and Afro-beat. He employs James Brown-style screams and grunts on top of harmonized horns and a pounding rhythm section. A trumpeter by trade, Olaiya began his musical education in school bands and later gave up the chance to study at university in America in order to follow his musical dream. Tony Allen and Fela Kuti each played with Olaiya before going on to achieve gargantuan personal success

propagating the burgeoning Afro-beat movement.

**CELESTINE UKWU** – Nigerian singer Celestine Ukwu began his career in the 1960s, and soon formed his own band, the Music Royals, who later became the Philosophers National in the 1970s. Ukwu was often described as a gentle man, a sentiment that seems to manifest itself in his music: his trademark sound is slow-paced, almost lackadaisical, yet deeply contagious. His lyrics typically dealt with issues of social concern and called for peace. Tragically, Celestine died in a car accident aged just 39 – his music tells of a genius that would have undoubtedly gone on to achieve much, much more.

**ORCHESTRE POLY-RYTHMO** – Benin's funk veterans have been laying down their unmistakable grooves since 1968. They were famous across West Africa in the 1970s for their versions of Afro-beat, *vodun* (voodoo)-inspired songs and Latin American funk. In the last few years Orchestre Poly-Rythmo have achieved their ambition to play outside of Africa and have wowed audiences on stages in London, Amsterdam and beyond. Listen out for whirling organ sounds, psychedelic hazy guitars and a meaty horn section.

**ORCHESTRA DE LA PAILLOTE** – Orchestra De La Paillote took its name from the Conakry club that was its home. The band, later known as Keletigui Et Ses Tambourinis, featured the

expert skills of Keletigui Traore, an expert banjo player, organist, saxophonist, flautist and singer. The orchestra played traditional instruments side by side with modern electric ones. 'Kadia Blues' offers a soupy, bluesy wash of sound, with extended trumpet and guitar solos that slowly wind the perfectly indulgent and melancholic mood along.

**ALÈMAYÈHU ESHÈTÉ** – In his youth, the Ethiopian singer Alèmayèhu Eshètè was so talented at mimicking the popular artists of the day that he earned the moniker 'Alèmayèhu Elvis'. He soon graduated from impressionist to fully fledged artist, and in the early 1960s went on to begin his career in Addis Ababa's famous Police Orchestra, before founding an orchestra with the famous lyricist and composer Girma Bèyènè. He was also one of the first Ethiopian musicians to record music on to vinyl. In recent years, Alèmayèhu has enjoyed renewed international success and can be heard intoning his signature melismatic vocals and jazz-inflected harmonies on this Rough Guide.

**BALLA ET SES BALLADINS** – The music played by Balla Onivogui and his band is wonderfully and unmistakably Guinean, while still retaining traces of Cuban and Congolese influence. Balla Et Ses Balladins modernized Guinean music by translating elements of traditional music on to electric guitars and horns. On the track 'Fadakudu' the lead guitar and bass play repeating interlocking rhythmic

motifs that are highly characteristic of the *bala* playing style. The *bala* is a traditional Guinean xylophone that is played by the *jelis* (griots).

**THE MILMANI PARK ORCHESTRA** – The Milmani Park Orchestra are famous for their *muzik wa danzi* style and for their intricate poetic lyrics. 'Taxi Driver' was, rather appropriately, released in 1980, while the band were managed by the Tanzania Transport and Taxi Services. They later came under the reign of the Dar Es Salaam Development Council, a department of the city council, only to become a fully independent organization in 2009. Their music is closely related to Tanzanian dance styles, alternating slower sung vocal sections with uptempo instrumental sections, during which their audiences are known to launch into extremely energetic dancing.

**ORCHESTRA BAOBAB** – This infamous Senegalese big band formed in 1970 and played Afro-Cuban music for the masses. Although hugely popular during the 1970s, the *mbalax* sound pioneered by former member Youssou N'Dour overshadowed the band in the 1980s. They reformed in 2001 after their now retro brand inspired a renewed public interest in the band. The track 'Nijaay' was composed by the legendary vocalist Laye Mboup and was first performed on Senegalese radio in 1972. This version features sabar drums, heavy wah-wah guitar and vocals from Assane Mboup.

**EBO TAYLOR** – Now in his seventies, Ebo Taylor is still going strong, and can be heard bringing his unique groove – influenced by highlife, Afro-beat and funk – on the track 'Nga Nga'. Taylor was a major figure in Ghanaian highlife during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1962, he moved to London to study, before returning to Ghana and enjoying a successful career as a producer and solo artist. His 2010 album *Love and Death* advances the cause of Afro-beat while retaining a deep psychedelic spice.

**VICTOR UWAIFO** – Sir Victor Uwaifo, as he is affectionately known, is famed for his eccentric performances. Hailing from Nigeria, he mixes in elements of highlife with a distinctly African-American funk angle. The subject of the song recounts an encounter he had with a water spirit, Mami Wata, while lounging on Bar Beach in Lagos, Nigeria.

**RAIL BAND** – Mali's famous Rail Band has played host to some of the biggest names in West African music, including Youssou N'Dour, Laye Mboup and Salif Keita. For thirty years the Rail Band was a hotbed of creativity, where the finest musicians honed their skills and experimented fusing traditional Mandingo or Bambara styles with psychedelic rock, Afro-beat, rumba, pop and anything else that came their way! Released in 1977, the track 'Wale Numa Lombaliya' features stunning lead vocals from none other than superstar griot Mory Kanté.

- 01 **VICTOR OLAYIA'S ALL STARS SOUL INTERNATIONAL** Let Yourself Go from the album VICTOR OLAYIA'S ALL STARS SOUL INTERNATIONAL (VAMPI 107) (Victor Olaiya) pub Vampisoul. Licensed from Premier Records.
- 02 **CELESTINE UKWU** Obialu Be Onye Abiagbunia Okwukwe from the album CELESTINE UKWU AND HIS PHILOSOPHERS NATIONAL (KMCD018) (Celestine Ukwu) pub Premier Records Ltd. Licensed from Premier Records.
- 03 **ORCHESTRE POLY-RYTHMO** Pardon from the album COTONOU CLUB (STRUT077CD) (Maximus Adjanohun) pub Sons d'Ailleurs. Licensed from Strut/K7.
- 04 **ORCHESTRA DE LA PAILLOTE** Kadia Blues from the album KELETIGUI ET SES TAMBOURINIS: THE SYLIPHONE YEARS (STCD3031-32) (Facelli Kante) pub Sterns Music. Licensed from Sterns Music.
- 05 **ALÈMAYÈHU ESHÈTÉ** Eruq Yaleshew from the album ETHIOPIQUES 9 (82983-2) (Alèmayèhu Eshètè, arr Girma Bèyènè) pub CRC Editions. Licensed from Buda Musique.
- 06 **BALLA ET SES BALLADINS** Fadakudu from the album BALLA ET SES BALLADINS: THE SYLIPHONE YEARS (STCD3035-36) (Balla Onivogui, Pivi Moriba) pub Sterns Music, Frochet Music Cantos. Licensed from Sterns Music.
- 07 **MILMANI PARK ORCHESTRA** Taxi Driver from the album ZANZIBARA 5 (860184) (Joseph Mulenga) pub Jahazi Media. Licensed from Buda Musique.
- 08 **ORCHESTRA BAOBAB** Nijaay from the album MADE IN DAKAR (WCD078) (Barthélemy Attisso/Laye Mboup/Assane Mboup/Youssou N'Dour) pub World Circuit Music. Licensed from World Circuit.
- 09 **EBO TAYLOR** Nga Nga from the album LOVE AND DEATH (STRUT073CD) (Ebo Taylor, Ben Abarbanel-Wolff, J. Whitefield, Ekow Alabi Savage) pub Shining Music!/K7 Publishing/Ebo Taylor. Licensed from Strut/K7.
- 10 **VICTOR UWAIFO** Guitar Boy from the album GREATEST HITS VOL. 1 (PMCD 018) (Victor Uwaifo) pub Premier Records Ltd. Licensed from Premier Records.
- 11 **RAIL BAND** Wale Numa Lombaliya from the album RAIL BAND 3: DIOBA (STCD3043-44) (Mory Kanté) pub Syllart Productions/Sterns Music. Licensed from Sterns Music.

Balla Et Ses Balladins

Orchestra De La Pailote

Rail Band

Orchestre Poly-Rythmo



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