AFRICA MIA

LAS MARAVILLAS DE MALI

MARAVILLAS
MALI

In 1999, on my very first trip to Africa, I met a flute player in the bush in Bamako, Mali. His name was Dramane Coulibaly. I asked him why he loved playing Cuban music so much, and he said to me, « In the Sixties, I went to Havana for ten years...**»**

His answer found an echo inside me, and it took me on a search that lasted twenty years, with visits to Mali, Ivory Coast, the Niger and Cuba to find the members of the legendary group to which he belonged : Las Maravillas de Mali.

During those years I found other musicians from the orchestra, filming and recording them, and in 2016 I went back to Havana, taking with me the Maestro, Boncana Maïga, the last survivor of that incredible Afro-Cuban saga. And then, fifty years later, retracing his past, we made a recording with new versions of the music from their only album, which had been produced at the Egrem studios in 1967.

That new album *Africa Mia*, which is also the soundtrack for the documentary with the same title, testifies to the fabulous story that began in the 60's in the days of the exchanges between Africa and Cuba : the story of the 'Marvels of Mali'!

Richard Minier

« Rendez-vous
ce soir,
chez Fatimata,
nous allons
danser jusqu'à
l'aube,
mon ami... »

Latin versions of that sweet chorus brought more than one dancer to her feet in the blessed times of Mali's early years of independence. The title was the period's soundtrack, an anthem that was quickly taken up throughout West Africa : *It was an instant smash! There wasn't a single party that didn't have that one playing... it was really hot!* said Cheikh-Tidiane Seck a few years later. Even before he'd become an unavoidable figure of modern Malian music, he'd been rocked in the arms of those sounds coming from his country's national radio. The music even reached ears on the other side of the Atlantic, in Cuba.

And it was there, in the legendary Egrem studios tucked away in the heart of Havana, that it was recorded by the Maravillas du Mali... whom some people would even compare to the Orquesta Aragon, the local institution. The Maravillas' impulsive, first 45rpm single marked Mali's definitive entrance into the modern era, and that's a fact. With just a few swaying lyrics added over that background of magic flutes and fiendish drums, the song told the true story of a Sabena airline hostess (a cousin of the band's drummer!) who was given a date by flute-player Dramane Coulibaly, to go out one night and dance until dawn... and what a story that was!

SABENA
BA
MA
KO

la
HA
BA
NA

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. It all started on September 22, 1960, when Mali gained its independence. President Modibo Keita would quickly promote his country's emancipation from the French colonial regime, and authenticity became a period by-word, a value of national cohesion that took on its fullest meaning with music. The concept was to compose original material that belonged to the modern age while tilling the fertile earth of the country's traditions.

And so it was that in 1963, ten young musicians from all over Mali were recruited to go to Cuba: one of them studied medicine; another worked in the Post Office; and one even trained as a footballer... There was Dramane, from Ségou, whose passion was music; and also Boncana Maïga, who played saxophone and banjo, and was the only one who already had something of a reputation (he was from Gao, and had played in western Mali with the Negro Band.) In January 1964 they all landed in Havana, where they quickly became symbols of the friendship that existed between brother countries. It was the beginning of an uncommon destiny — it was anything but banal — for a highly original combo.

Only a year after their arrival, the Malians found themselves attending the Alejandro Garcia Conservatory, where their teachers were maestros, among them Rafaël Lay, who led the Orquesta Aragon. The Malians named themselves the Maravillas du Mali, after the Maravillas of Florida, a band that was a favourite with many young people in Havana.

As for the young Malians, they completely conquered the Cuban population, seducing them with their own Afro-Cuban blend of 100% gumbo dance-music. The Malian band toured throughout Cuba, starring at the Pan African Festival and Havana Cooperation Weeks of 1968, and they even made Che Guevara get up and dance!

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, word was spreading (*Boogaloo will be Mali*, to paraphrase one of their emblematic hits) until suddenly, on November 19, 1968, there was a coup d'état in Mali and President Keita was overthrown. Lieutenant Moussa Traoré took up the country's reins. There was a change in atmosphere for the lovers of the cha cha cha of Independence, and there was a reversal in the fortunes of the «Marvellous Malians» who, at the same moment, were recording for posterity: guarachas and cha cha chas, son montuno songs and beautiful boleros... Among the latter was the Rendez-vous chez Fatimata, which came out as a 45rpm single. And from the Niger to the Guinea Republic, every hip-hugging family was swaying to its sensual rhythms. People, however, were now associating this band with the old regime, and when the Maravillas orchestra returned home they were ostracised... and then disbanded. They had an appointment with History, and they missed it... but not quite, because now, half a century later, their album has finally been released from the shadows of the collective memory and into the light of day...

RENDEZ-VOUS CHEZ FATIMATA FEAT. **MORY KANTÉ**	03 :08
BOOGALOO SERA MALI ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	02 :52
AFRICA MIA ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	03 :08
RADIO MALI / HAVANA 2016 VERSION	04 :16
MARAVILLAS DE MALI ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	03 :20
BALOMINA MWANGA BAMAKO 2016 VERSION	03 :16
AFRICA MIA FEAT. **ROLDÁN GONZÁLEZ** / BAMAKO 2016 VERSION	02 :15
LUMUMBA / ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	03 :24
ANDURINA / ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	03 :49
BOOGALOO SERA MALI FEAT. **INNA MODJA** / BAMAKO 2016 VERSION	03 :16
M'A MOUSSO FEAT. **INNA MODJA** / BAMAKO 2016 VERSION	02 :37
SOY GUAJIRO / ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	02 :41
CHEZ FATIMA / ORIGINAL ALBUM VERSION	02 :50
AFRICA MIA FEAT. **ROLDÁN GONZÁLEZ** / AEROSTEAK REMIX	03 :52
BALOMINA MWANGA AEROSTEAK AND FUNKFISH REMIX	03 :14
BOOGALOO SERA MALI FEAT. **INNA MODJA** / AEROSTEAK REMIX	03 :44
RENDEZ-VOUS CHEZ FATIMATA FEAT. **MORY KANTÉ** / CELESTAL REMIX	02 :53

Rendez-vous chez Fatimata feat. Mory Kanté
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Produced by Boncana Maïga & Richard Minier
Arranged by Boncana Maïga
vocals and kora : Mory Kanté / backing vocals : Antonio Luis Morales & Faustino Rodriguez / flute : Sergio Sarmientos Echavarria / piano : Alberto Moreno Herrera / bass : Vivian Armando Fuentes Silegad / violins : Hugo Cruz Olmos & José Antonio Peres Fuentes / cello : Vivian Armador Farinas / timbales : Enrique Labato Barreto / percussion : Antonio Hernandez Penalver
Recorded at Egrem Studio-La Habana (2016)
Additional recording at Melodium studio by Nicolas Dufournet (2018)
Mixed by Pierre-Emmanuel Meriaud at Screening Room
Mastering by Jean-Pierre Chalbos at La Source mastering (2018)

Chez Fatimata, *Africa Mia*, *Boogaloo Sera Mali*, *Maravillas de Mali*, *Soy Guajiro*, and *Lumumba* (original album versions)
(Boncanaissa Maïga) © Heavy Surf Ⓟ Egrem
flute and guiro : Boncana Maïga / piano : Khalil Traoré / bass : Salif Traoré / violins : Mustapha Sakho, Aliou Traoré, Joaquin Betancourt, So Pilon / guiro and flute : Dramane Coulibaly / tumba : Bah Tapo / percussion : Antonio Luis Morales
Recorded and mixed at Egrem Studio-La Habana by José Gutierrez
Mastering by Jean-Pierre Chalbos at La Source mastering (2017)

Andurina (original album version)
(Juan y Junior, arranged by Boncanaissa Maïga) © Heavy Surf Ⓟ Egrem
flute and guiro : Boncana Maïga / piano : Khalil Traoré / bass : Salif Traoré / violins : Mustapha Sakho, Aliou Traoré, Joaquin Betancourt, So Pilon / guiro and flute : Dramane Coulibaly / tumba : Bah Tapo / percussion : Antonio Luis Morales
Recorded and mixed at Egrem Studio-La Habana by José Gutierrez
Mastering by Jean-Pierre Chalbos at La Source mastering (2017)

Africa Mia feat. Roldán González (Bamako 2016 version)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Produced by Richard Minier
programming : Richard Minier / trumpet : Julien Duchet / vocals and guitar : Roldán González
Recorded at Heavy Surf Studio-Paris and Egrem Studio-La Habana
Mixed by Maxime Le Guil in Paris (2016)

Boogaloo Sera Mali and *M'a Mousso* (Bamako 2016 versions)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Produced by Richard Minier
guitar and percussions : Dramane Coulibaly / flute : Dramane Coulibaly / guitar : Richard Minier / backing vocals : Dramane Coulibaly & Mustapha Sakho / vocals : Inna Modja / backing vocals : Manda Sissoko
Recorded at Grand Hôtel-Bamako and Heavy Surf Studio-Paris by Richard Minier and at Humble Ark Studio-Bamako by Manjul
Mixed by Maxime Le Guil in Paris (2016)

Balomina Mwanga (Bamako 2016 version)
(Franklin Boukaka & Dramane Coulibaly)
Produced by Richard Minier
guitar and percussion : Dramane Coulibaly / guitar : Bruno Ferreira / vocals : Dramane Coulibaly / backing vocals : Ruth-Eva Bekono Booh
Recorded at Grand Hôtel-Bamako and Heavy Surf Studio-Paris by Richard Minier and at Humble Ark Studio-Bamako by Manjul
Mixed by Maxime Le Guil in Paris (2016)

Radio Mali (Havana 2016 version)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Produced by Boncana Maïga & Richard Minier

flute : Sergio Sarmientos Echavarria / piano : Alberto Moreno Herrera / bass : Vivian Armando Fuentes Silegad / violins : Hugo Cruz Olmos & José Antonio Peres Fuentes / guiro, congas and timbales : Enrique Labato Barreto & Antonio Hernandez Penalver / vocals : Antonio Luis Morales & Faustino Rodriguez
Recorded at Egrem Studio-La Habana (2016)
Mixed by Pierre Emmanuel Meriaud at Screening Room
Mastering by Jean-Pierre Chalbos at La Source mastering (2018)

Africa Mia feat. Roldán González (Aerosteak remix)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Additionnal remix and production by Serge Sentis

Balomina Mwanga (Aerosteak & Funkfish remix)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Additionnal remix and production by Richard Minier & Serge Sentis

Boogaloo sera Mali feat. Inna Modja (Aerosteak remix)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Additionnal remix and production by Serge Sentis

Rendez-vous chez Fatimata feat. Mory Kanté (Celestal remix)
(Boncanaissa Maïga)
Additionnal production by Celestal
programming : Cédric Lorrain, Olivier Visconti & Stephane Lozac'h / keyboards : Cédric Lorrain, Olivier Visconti & Stephane Lozac'h

All the tracks published by Heavy Surf except *Andurina* and *Balomina Mwanga*
Produced by Richard Minier & Boncana Maïga / Executive producer : Richard Minier for Heavy Surf
Artists & repertoire : Nicolas Pflug

Artwork and illustrations : les sœurs Chevalme
Photographs : personal archives of Dramane Coulibaly and Boncana Maïga / Picture and artwork cover album : Richard Minier (photo) & Léonce Barbezieux

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Havana Club International S.A.

Boncana Maïga : Thank you to my family for supporting me for all these years.
Las Maravillas de Mali : Aliou Traoré, Dramane Coulibaly, Mustapha Sakho, Bah Tapo, Khalil Traoré, Salif Traoré and all the Maravillas family
Daniel Cuxac

Richard Minier : A massive thank you to my family and my friends for all their love and support over the years.

Las Maravillas de Mali : Boncana Maïga, Aliou Traoré, Dramane Coulibaly, Mustapha Sakho, Bah Tapo, Khalil Traoré, Salif Traoré, Olga Sisnéro and all the Maravillas family.
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Eric Monteil, Leslie Dubest, Erick Viollet, Marc Antoine Moreau.
Pierre Marie Bouvery, Pascal Blanchard, Jean Philippe Bodin, Emmanuel Cyriaque, Frédéric Guelaff, Thomas Mondo, Madé Taounza, Léonce Barbezieux, Sam Stourdze, Karen Paulina Biswell, Ivan Malherbe, Damien Delgueldre, Maximillien Kamir, Christian Brun, Olivier Buslot, Jake Bailey, Mélodie Médam.
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Julie Chuzel & Ada Chuzel Minier, my loves xxx