

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Kenyan music has featured in numerous compilations for the international market. Often, the focus has been on a particular genre such as classic *benga*, one of several *rumba* variants, or perhaps centering on the work of a particular artist within a genre. In the same vein as the acclaimed Soundway collections *Ghana Special* and *Nigeria Special*, *Kenya Special* takes a different path in that it concentrates on a collection of 32 unusual recordings that stand out as being different or unique. At the same time it includes a few standard genre classics (especially of Kikuyu guitar genre) as reference points for departure. Most importantly it demonstrates how Kenyan musicians were tuned into international sounds and all the styles around them and that, in fact, there was a tremendous amount of music experimentation and innovation during the 1970s and '80s in East Africa.

To understand where these songs come from a little background information is in order. Kenya has one of the most diverse musical environments in all of Africa. Coming out of the 1950s, there were several popular musical styles. On the one hand, there were finger-picking guitar styles by solo and duo artists from western Kenya alongside a competing finger-picking guitar style performed by Congolese guitarists from eastern Congo/Zaire based in Kenya. On the other, there were small ensembles like the Jambo Boys Band (later, reconstituted as the Equator Sound Band), hotel cover bands, company sponsored pop groups, and the like. Of course, as is often the case, the story is a little more complex than that. These bands didn't play just one style (and neither did the finger guitarists) but the Equator Sound Studio and its band were extremely influential in setting the tone for the '60s. Charles Worrod took over what became the Equator Sound Studio in 1961. The previous ownership had on staff some of the top creative names of the time including: Fadhili William (of [the big hit] *Malaika* fame) and Daudi Kabaka. Worrod kept on most of these initial members who later became The African Eagles Band (aka The Eagles Lupopo): Nashil Pichen & Peter Tsotsi-Juma (both Zambians), and Gabriel Omolo. Collaborating with Daudi Kabaka, Worrod was the creative push for *twist* music (by no means an exact copy of the American twist), one of the most popular beats that reigned in Kenya in the 1960s. Twist was bright, bouncy, guitar music, usually in two-part harmonies that appropriated the South African *kwela* beat, a fast *wemoweh* rhythm. The Equator guitarists (like Kabaka and Tsotsi) must have been familiar with American rock 'n' roll from the late 1950s and '60s as well. When not playing *twist*, their music is filled with a profusion of little riffs lifted from American pop hits. Kabaka's major hit, *Harambee*, recorded by Daudi with Fadhili William on guitars and Ugandan Charles Sonko on bass is a great example of the recycling a multitude of ideas to form a fresh sound. The song has a walking bass line (not common in African pop), a melody borrowed from the American song *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, a series of rockabilly riffs and solos, Swahili lyrics reflecting an uplifting political message of the time, and all done in the familiar two-part vocal harmony of the finger picking guitarists.

That was one aspect of the '60s. The finger-picking guitar music gradually faded out by the end of the decade and new *rumba* sounds from Zaire (Congo) and Tanzania were gaining traction in the record market as well. We start to hear more *rumba*

music recorded in Kenya's local languages and Swahili, but by the end of the '60s we're also starting to hear the earliest rumblings of *benga*, Kenya's unique contribution to Afro-pop.

Benga originated among the Luo musicians coming from the lands surrounding Lake Victoria in western Kenya. It's most famous proponent, the guitarist/bandleader D.O. Misiani actually played with Daudi Kabaka in the Equator Sound Band for a couple of years in the mid '60s. But when he left to form his own group, Luo Sweet Voice (and later, D.O. Shirati Jazz or The D.O.7 band as on this compilation), it was the dawn of a new style that caught on like wildfire. As you listen to Misiani's *H.O. Ongili*, you hear the early sound of *benga*: in the first half of the song, the sparse instrumentation, interlocking syncopated rhythms with the guitar,

bass, and snare drum, and typical Luo melody in two part harmony. Typical of *benga*, the end of the song opens up into a fast instrumental section and a demonstration of guitar prowess. This part is typical of the very active bass lines and the hallmark of later *benga*, the pulsing kick drum and, of course, some great guitar soloing.

It didn't take long before bands from other parts of Kenya were formulating their own versions of *benga*. One of the things you'll notice is how the melodies are tribal-centric. That is, Luo melodies are quite distinct from Kamba melodies or those of the Kikuyu musicians. The sole example of Kamba pop on the compilation, the Kalambya Boys' *Kivelenge* is a fabulous example of pure Kamba *benga*, at least for the first half. In the second half, where we would expect the typical instrumental climax featuring the solo guitar, we're in for something completely unexpected. The solos open up to American rock influenced guitar licks and note bending that isn't normally part of "typical" Kamba *benga*.



D.O. Misiani



DK Mwai of the Lulus Band

The remaining *benga* bands on *Kenya Special* are all Kikuyu but, not necessarily playing straight *benga* music. For the best example of pure Kikuyu *benga*, check out the track from 1977 by The Gatanga Boys Band, *Wendo Ti Mbia* or the Huruma Boys' *Teresia*. As in other parts of Africa, the mid to late 1970s were an exciting time. Imported disco, rock and funk started to have an impact and many of the tracks featured here are peppered with innovation and experimentation. Records start to appear with genres like 'Liquid Soul' written on the labels and it's noticeable how well recorded and cut the 45s become, with local engineers getting remarkable results from the limited equipment at their disposal.



River Road

Benga groups almost always have tribal affiliations and are attached to an ancestral homeland. Thus, there are Luo bands from their home region surrounding Lake Victoria in western Kenya, Kikuyu bands are associated with the Gikuyu people in the highlands to the north of Nairobi and the home of the Kamba bands is a vast area to the east of Nairobi. Each ethnicity sings in its own regional language and mainly to fellow speakers of their language. Yet, the pulse of all this *benga* activity centres on multi-ethnic Nairobi, and in particular, a compact business district named for the small street that flows through it, **River Road**. At one time a pre-independence commercial area, in the 1960s and '70s this became Kenya's musical heart. At its peak, there were hundreds of retail record shops in River Road and a high percentage of those were owned by record producers who were churning out a vast amount of 45rpm vinyl records. This was undoubtedly the centre of the *benga* world. There were a few Swahili and Congolese *rumba* recordings from River Road but more often those styles were left to the multinational labels like Polygram, EMI, and CBS or to label proprietors of European or East Asian descent.



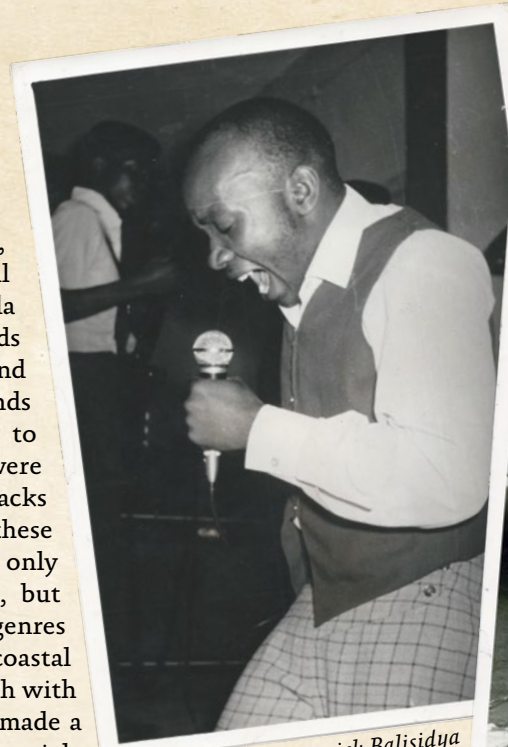
The Mombasa Vikings

The singles business was well entrenched at the time of Kenya's independence in 1963 and continued through the *benga* boom of the '70s before cassettes came into widespread use. The fees were high but the process was fast. Musicians from the rural areas could bus into Nairobi, make a deal with a producer to record a few songs, pop into a studio for a few hours, go home the next day and a record would be pressed and ready for sale a week later. The initial pressing could be as little as 50 records, though a top selling record might sell from five to ten thousand, (or even more) copies.

With hundreds of releases each month and with few long-playing full-length albums made, it is no wonder that a great many of these have been lost over time, regardless of their popularity or musical significance. Looking beyond the mainstream, *Kenya Special* brings new life and recognition to some little known gems and forgotten classics of Kenya's past.

During the '60s and '70s, Nairobi had emerged as the commercial centre for East Africa and the tourist portal for the region. With the rising African elite and foreign tourists came five star hotels and nightlife to match. This clientele was more interested in the pop hits of Europe and America than the music of the streets. The hotels on the Kenyan coast and in Nairobi hired bands that could play 'copyright music' (cover versions) and write their own music in a sort of international sound with African components woven in. Among the copyrights, American soul and funk as well as West African afrobeat (Fela Kuti and Orlando Julius records amongst others were pressed and distributed in Kenya and bands from West Africa often came to play in Nairobi and Mombasa) were popular and in some of the tracks included here you can hear these elements being worked into not only the music of the hotel bands, but among all the popular local genres of the time: *benga*, *rumba*, coastal sounds, etc. The Hodi Boys (both with and without vocalist Slim Ali) made a name for themselves for their straight out American influenced soul, but their track *Mtoto Nyara* is typical of the driving bass and percussion flowing from the *chakacha* rhythm. *Chakacha* features in the music of quite a number of the coastal tourist bands providing the perfect foundation, for example, for The Mombasa Vikings' *Kibe Kibe* - bold brass lines over a spacey keyboard, wah-wah guitar, and solos by sax, trumpet, and guitar.

As the '70s advanced, *rumba* took on a bigger presence in Kenya. *Tamba Tamba* by Nairobi Matata is the best example here of home-grown *rumba* from Kenya; Swahili *rumba* (differentiated from Congolese *rumba*) is characterised by the active, yet delicate, rhythm guitar part which meshes so well with the bass, and the percussion that is concentrated almost entirely on the drummer's high hat as well as the ever present, pulsing kick drum.



Patrick Balisidya
of the Afro 70



Daudi Kabaka & Peter Tsotsi

The Swahili language (native to the East African coast) is widely understood throughout Kenya, especially in the cities and towns. That gives Swahili *rumba* the added advantage of a much larger audience throughout Kenya and Tanzania who can understand the lyrics. Aside from Nairobi Matata and notable exceptions such as Kabaselleh Ochieng and the Maroon Commandos, Kenyan groups largely ceded *rumba* to foreign neighbouring bands. Up to the closing of the Kenya-Tanzania border in 1977, Tanzanian bands would come to Nairobi on

a regular basis to record and perform. The two Tanzanian bands featured in this compilation (Super Volcano and Afro 70) made numerous recordings in Nairobi and were revered by Kenyans for their versions of Swahili *rumba*. Afro 70's *Week End*, released in 1972, is a mainstream representation of the genre but compare that leisurely *rumba* to the group's other two tracks on *Kenya Special*. Afro 70's *Afrousa (Move On)* from 1975 is definitely in the contemporary soul-influenced 'afro' realm with a vocal line sounding almost like Sly and the Family Stone. *Cha-Umheja*, on the other hand, goes to a completely different inspirational source. This is a direct afro-pop translation of the traditional music of the Wagogo people of central Tanzania, all be it, with added piano and wah-wah guitar. (You can hear the traditional versions of such music in the *ilimba* recordings of Hukwe Zawose who came from this same region).

With political and economic uncertainty in 1970s Zaire, many *rumba* bands from eastern Congo hit the road to take advantage of opportunities in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, and beyond. Some of these groups just kept moving until they landed in Nairobi where they found a receptive and welcoming audience. Nashil Pichen, working with Super Mazembe in Zambia was instrumental in facilitating their move to Kenya in 1975. At about the same time, Baba Gaston's Orchestra Baba National arrived in Nairobi and this paved the way for other renowned Congolese bands to settle, (such as Les Mangelepa), many of whom became hugely popular in Kenya for years to come. On *Kenya Special*, Gaston's *Sweet Sweet Mbombo* is an interesting mix and is a great example of how elements from all over Africa were forming some very unique music in mid 1970s Kenya. It starts off with what sounds like a West African *highlife* number on a *rumba* foundation but then

Mungai Kangwana (Right)



Muhina of Nairobi Matata Jazz

moves into bluesy guitar and sax solos. The other Congolese number from Orchestre Vève Star is a true departure from the classic Verckys sound. *Nitarudia* highlights the familiar horn parts of classic Orchestra Vève but runs in a completely different direction with an eight minute vamp on two chords and a bass-heavy funk rhythm. The simple Swahili lyric is a reassuring "I love you" and "wherever I go I'll return to you." The fact that it was done in Swahili and English with references to Nairobi and other East African locations was clearly an effort to connect with that audience. The majority of Kenyans don't speak a word of Lingala, the language usually heard in Congolese recordings (despite many big hits of the time being sung by those

bands in their mother tongue). The interesting thing about both Swahili and Lingala songs is that since these languages are not associated with particular tribal groups in Kenya, they can appeal to all Kenyans without any overtones of tribal loyalty or rivalry.



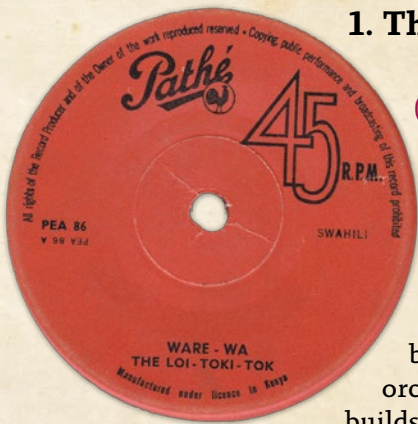
Finally, we return to the musicians of the Equator Sound Band (by the way, usually singing in Swahili). This group, so prominent in the '60s didn't simply go away in the '70s. It's true, however, that by the late '60s, their *twist* style had faded, displaced by the rising *benga* and *rumba* tides. In this time of musical transformation, the musicians severed ties with the Equator label and embarked on a new path for the 1970s under various 'Eagles' monikers. The core of the new band was Daudi Kabaka with Gabriel Omolo and Zambians Nashil Pichen and Peter Tsotsi. Their music defies an easy label, instead drawing on influences from far and wide. In general, we might say they joined the *rumba* camp, but their four tracks on this compilation demonstrate nothing of the sort. Each track seems to derive from a traditional rhythm or vocal pattern but the arrangements are truly modern in style.

The beauty of Kenya Special is that it's a treasure trove of rare and unusual compositions from some of East Africa's most revered bands, taking their music in new directions. It is a tribute to musical innovation and creativity, previously undocumented or compiled in one collection....until now.

Doug Paterson.

Seattle, February, 2013.

1. The Loi Toki Tok – *Ware Wa*



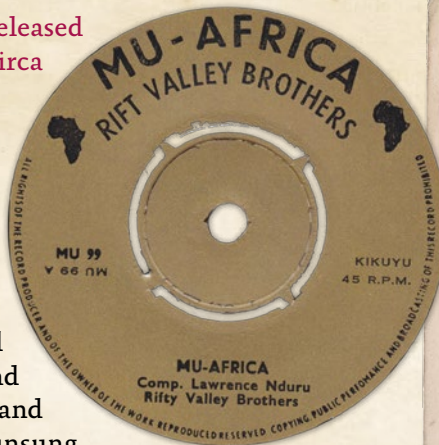
(Swahili) Written by Loi Toki Tok. Originally released on Pathe East Africa Records 45rpm 7" single (PEA 86) circa 1972.

One of a few tracks on this collection that follow the West African model of adapting traditional tribal rhythms and chants into a big-band format. Reminiscent of the afrobeat orchestras of Ghana, Benin and Nigeria *Ware-Wa* builds and drops with an almost jazz sensibility. The track became quite a hit as one of EMI East Africa's first releases on their Pathe imprint, and was covered a year or two later by Kenyan afro-rock group Cobra. This is indicative that despite the dominance of *benga* and *rumba*, East African 'afro' sounds we're bubbling under the surface, and groups like The Latapaza Band, Black Savage, Air Fiesta, The Cavaliers and Cobra played their part alongside the imported afro-rock bands from Nigeria and Zambia.

2. Rift Valley Brothers – *Mu Afrika*

(Kikuyu) Written by Lawrence Nduru. Originally released on a Mu-Africa Records 45rpm 7" single (MU99) circa mid 1970s.

This song rekindles memories of the fiery wave of the black consciousness movement that swept across the African diaspora from 1960s through to the '80s. The Rift Valley Brothers band's lyrics are seemingly a clarion call imploring local Kenyans to come to terms with their rich African roots and home-grown heroes. These were likely inspired and penned in praise of Kenya's liberation struggle and key *Mau Mau* frontline freedom fighters. Several unsung and long forgotten 'bush' generals are saluted for their sweat, gallantry and bloodshed. But the underlying message is undeniably emphatic on the pressing need (especially for the younger generation) to embrace self-consciousness and pride in their African heritage.



3. Slim Ali & The Famous Hodi Boys – *Watoto Nyara*

(Swahili) Written by Slim Ali. Originally released on a Hoditone Records 45rpm 7" single (HIT4) 1976.

One of his few Swahili compositions *Watoto Nyara* stands out because the majority of Slim Ali's songs were composed and sung in English. Alongside other Kenyan soul acts like the Ashantis and Air Fiesta he also had some success around other parts of Africa, Europe and America. Here Slim invites and rallies young and old alike to come out and join in traditional music (*ngoma*). With a strong feel of some of the afro-funk coming out of West Africa it appeared only on the small Hoditone label and not on any of his LPs.

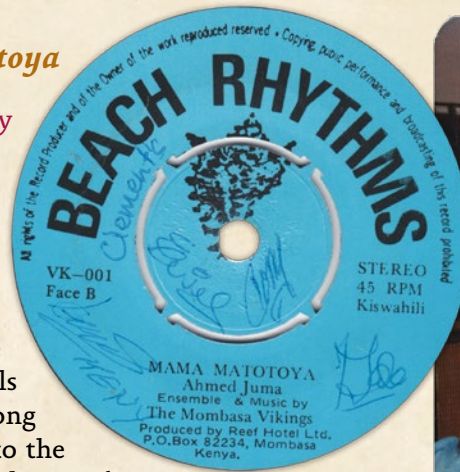


Slim Ali with band members

4. The Mombasa Vikings – *Mama Matotoya*

(Kiswahili) Written by Ahmed Juma. Originally released on a Beach Rhythm Records 45rpm 7" single (VK-001) circa 1975.

Undeniably this track was influenced by the Nigerian afrobeat of Fela Kuti with a touch of coastal *chakacha* rhythms. The Vikings were a band that typify the make up of many of the coastal bands that made a living playing in hotels and beach bars. Mombasa and other towns along the coast have a rich history that owe as much to the countries that fringe the Indian ocean as to the cultures of the Kenyan interior. This is reflected in the city's cultural heritage and in many ways the Vikings' music and personnel are steeped in this history with a multi-ethnic line up and a broad range of styles.



DK Mwai performance



The Mombasa vikings late 70s

5. The Lulus Band – *Ngwendeire Guita*

(Kikuyu) Written by D. Kamau & J. Gicheha. Originally released on a Kirinyaga Records 45rpm 7" single (KGA 513) 1977.

A track that really illustrates what a tight dance outfit D. K. Mwai's Lulu's Band were. An almost locked rat-a-tat-tat machine-gun groove, with sharp guitar licks and bouncing bass, is simple yet devastating on the dancefloor. Loosely translated the singer is decreeing his love for a woman called 'Sussy'. Her stylish appearance and appealing and captivating manner draws attention. Sussy's poise and hairstyle are eye-catching, so much that she always attracts admiring glances from other men.



6. Mbiri Young Stars – *Ndiri Ndanogio Niwe*

(Kikuyu) Written by Simon Kihara. Originally released on a Kiru Brothers Sound Records 45rpm 7" single (DOUBLE03) circa early 1980s.

Simon Kihara's (aka Musiamo) music career took root from humble beginnings – starting out in the mid 1970s in the Undugu Beat Band made up of streetwise youths who shared a common passion for music. His stature as an artist and prolific composer still fires up an enduring appeal for his music, evidenced by high audience turnout during live concerts whether performing in an

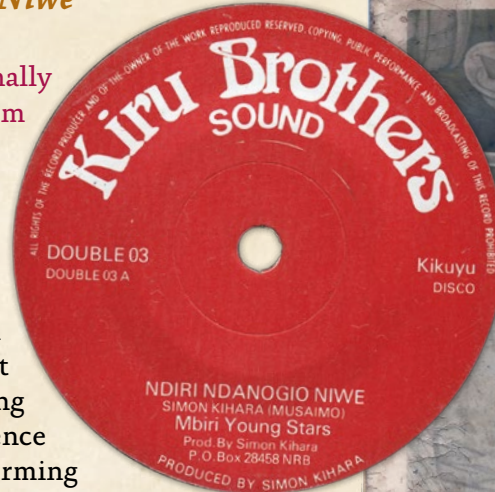
urban or rural setting. The song's lyrics revolve around the story of a young man not keen on giving up pursuit of this beautiful neighbourhood girl, the one who almost everyone else thinks is 'beyond reach', and hence not worth making any moves on.

7. Gatanga Boys Band – *Wendo Ti Mbia*

(Kikuyu) Written by Mungai Kangwana. Originally released on a Mercury Records 45rpm 7" single (MER7-008) circa 1977/78.

Wendo Ti Mbia is a perfect example of bouncy late 1970s feel-good 'liquid soul'

benga, with heavy bass-lines and crisp production. This song's lyrics reach out to and beseech Lucy (a beautiful girl the singer is fast falling in love with) to warm up to his feelings. "... the love I feel for you Lucy is intense, so much that if love could be equitable to money, then I would now be a millionaire..", Kangwana sings. There are moments he craves to spend time with her, often opting to abstain from work. The small town of Gatanga in Kenya's central providence can claim to have produced far more than it's fair share of famous Kikuyu musicians - many of whom are closely related (Mungai Kangwana was a cousin of the Lulus Band leader D.K. Mwai).

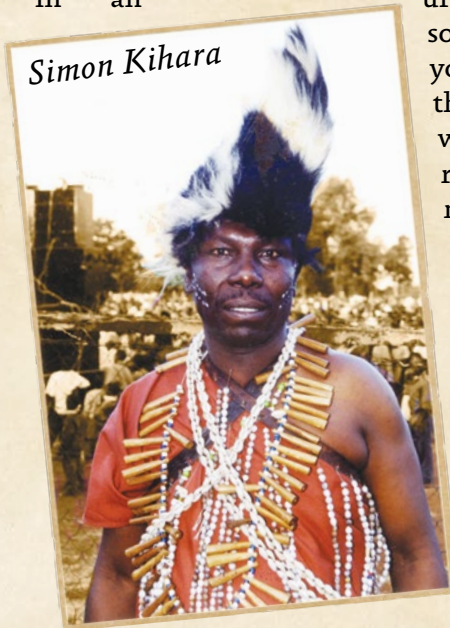
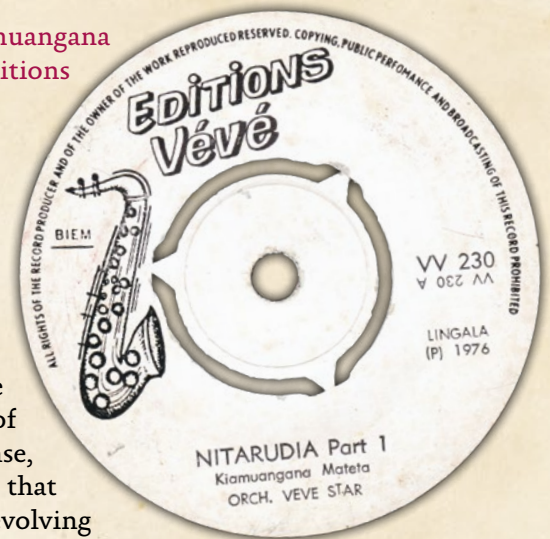


Mungai Kangwana & the Gatanga Boys Band.

8. Orchestra Vévé Star – *Nitarudia*

(Swahili / English) Written by Kiamuangana Mateta. Originally released on a Editions Vévé 45rpm 7" single (VV230) 1976.

With Kiamuangana Mateta aka Verckys playing saxophone, the horn section on this track was destined to be impressive. *Natarudia* (I Will Come Back) is a song that is dedicated to a girlfriend left behind whilst the band hits the road. The bond of love shared between them is intense, deep and enduring, so much so, that whenever he leaves, thoughts revolving around her still linger in his mind. "There are sometimes when I miss and cry for you" he sings..."and now I'm going to Zaire, but don't worry baby I'll come back here to Nairobi to see you".



Simon Kihara

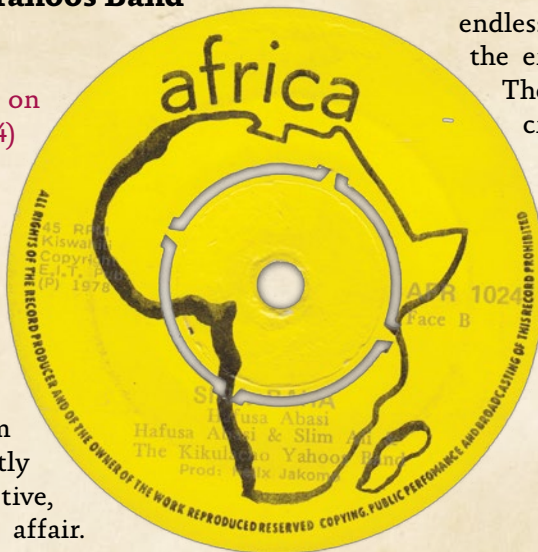
Vévé Star's Verckys



9. Hafusa Abasi & Slim Ali with The Yahoos Band – *Sina Raha*

Written by Hafusa Abasi. Originally released on an Africa Records 45rpm 7" single (AFR1024) 1978.

Prolific singer Hafusa Abasi's melodious voice and rich vocal range, shines through *Sina Raha* (literally 'I'm sad/unhappy'). The song is performed on the popular coastal *chakacha* rhythm with vocal echoes of arabic-influenced *taarab* music. An almost fleeting interlude intoned in English by crooner Slim Ali, adds a pinch of spice to the predominantly Swahili worded lyrical lines. Hafusa is emotive, evoking the dilemma of a *single-lane* love affair. Eventually the unrequited feelings lead to an inevitable and painful break-up. Although the prospective partner opts to walk away, the smitten lover is still optimistic their feelings shall, in the long run, triumph and be reciprocated at some point soon.



10. D.O.7 Band – *H. O. Ongili*

(previously released under the incorrect title H.O. Ochiri) (Luo) Written by D.O. Misiani. Taken from the Pathe compilation LP "Kenya Partout Vol 1" circa 1977.

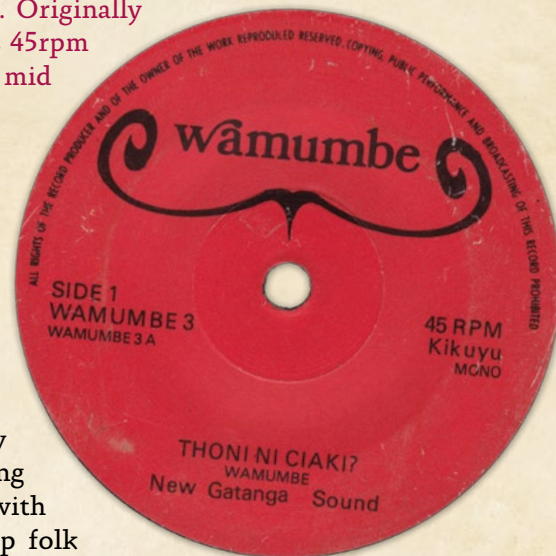
Numerous reviews from the 1970s often described D. O. Misiani's songs as a fresh, potent mix, with his guitar riffs insistently honed to perfection. The artist easily struck a chord with listeners cutting across linguistic barriers. His at times amusing and thinly-veiled, yet hard-hitting lyrics, endeared the prolific songwriter and performer to thousands of loyal fans. On frequent instances, his penchant for radical social commentaries thrust the D.O. Shirati Jazz band frontman on to a collision course with the then oppressive regime. However in this praise song, *H.O. Ongili* pays tribute to one-time Member of Parliament for the Gem constituency, whose stint as a people's representative was progressive.

11. New Gatanga Sound – *Thoni Ni Ciaki*

(Kikuyu) Written by Wamumbe. Originally released on a Wamumbe Records 45rpm 7" single (WAMUMBE3) circa mid 1980s.

Back in the day, *Thoni Ni Ciaki* was one of the late 1970s hit songs – popularised by endless play requests during the era of jukebox machines.

The lyrics are simply crafted, resonating easily with cross-sections of urbanites, particularly those who enjoyed toasting the sunset blues away with a drink, listening to pop folk hits like this one. He sings, '...love is sweet.. but love is also unpredictable.. some cry others lose their property.. why are you being shy?. let's make the right choice of love..'





12. The Lulus Band – *Nana*

(Kikuyu) Written by D. Kamau. Originally released on a D.K Undugu Sound 45rpm 7" single (DKS7-010) 1976.

The Kikuyu guitar music scene is replete with prolific composers. But Daniel Kamau Mwai (D. K. Mwai) stands tall above a pack of leading Kikuyu musicians. Some of his songs cut on this disc were recorded in the early 1970s until the 80s. One of his tracks released in 1970 sold over 10,000

units, though in the ensuing years he composed many

more smash hits. But the track *Nana* (there was also a follow-up 'part 2') that was banned on the state controlled VOK radio station owing to its supposed 'obscene' lyrics, overnight propelled DK into prominence. The poetic lyrics cry out to his lover, not to abandon him just yet... as he lies undressed in bed. A strong American bluesy-soul influence is present in the instrumentation.



DK with musicians

13. Nashil Pichen & The Eagles Lupopo – *Ng'ong'a wa Mwanjalo*

(Chiluba) Written by N. Pichen. Originally released on an African Eagles Recording Ltd Records 45rpm 7" single (ER55) Circa 1972/3.

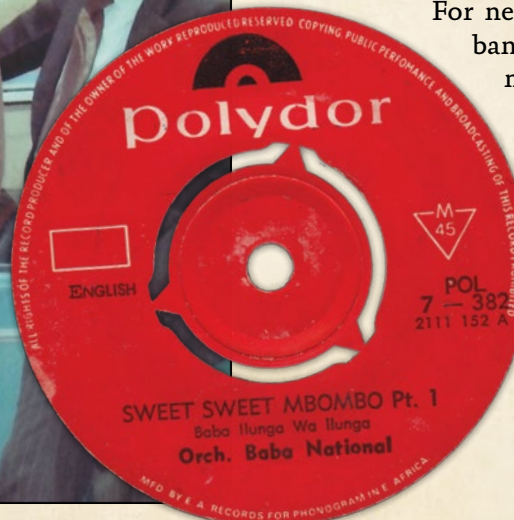
Nashil Pichen Kazembe is still hailed as a legendary Zambian and East African music icon. But just like his compatriot Peter Tsotsi-Juma, he is on instances incorrectly identified as a Kenyan musician. This is largely as a result of his relocation from southern Zambia to Nairobi in the early 1960s. Pichen pitched tent and nurtured an illustrious career, riding the crest of the vibrant Kenyan music scene. Some of his popular songs were duets or collectives featuring Tsotsi alongside Eagles Lupopo band luminaries like Daudi Kabaka and Fadhili William. Pichen's unique prowess on guitar is evident on this double-tempo track, in which he sings the lyrics in the Congolese Luba-Kasai dialect.



14. Orchestre Baba National – *Sweet Sweet Mbombo*

(Swahili / English) Written by B. Gaston. Originally released on a Polydor East Africa 45rpm 7" single (POL7-382) 1977.

For nearly three decades, the Orchestre Baba National's band leader and composer Baba Gaston Wa Illunga managed to carve a prominent niche for the band on Nairobi's music scene. He was, in many peoples eyes, ranked very highly amongst the godfathers of 'made-in-Kenya' Congolese pop. The lyrics of Gaston's Kenyan-recorded songs, mostly sung in Swahili, are still fashionable now just as they were in the golden age of the 1970s & '80s. *Sweet Sweet Mbombo* likewise rekindles those fond memories, riding on the back of its part-pidgin english lyrics and spine tingling sax lines. Sweet Sweet indeed.



Afro 70



15. Afro 70 – *Cha-Umheja*

(Swahili) Written by Patrick & Stephen Balisidya. Taken from the AIT /RCA compilation - Afro 70 (1975).

From way back in early 1970s, lead vocalist and guitarist Patrick Balisidya's voice still remains priceless and undoubtedly reigns, even after his death, as the band's trademark identity. On this song, which is laden with somewhat subtle afro-jazz overtones, he sings in his indigenous dialect whilst also slipping in several Swahili words "...kila mtu anampenda.." (everyone loves her), one of the band's rare love songs.

16. Peter Tsotsi-Juma & The Eagles Lupopo – *Kajo Golo Weka*

(Ngoni / Ligwamba) Written by Peter Tsotsi -Juma. Originally released on an African Eagles Recording Ltd Records 45rpm 7" single (ER55) Circa 1972/3.

Peter Tsotsi-Juma was one of Zambia's legendary artists, but is often mistakenly listed as a Kenyan musician. His name tends to crop up whenever close friend and fellow compatriot Nashil Pichen is mentioned. Tsotsi's most memorable songs were composed and recorded as collectives or duets featuring Pichen. Despite their famous, simply worded (usually Swahili) lyrics this unique and hauntingly beautiful track is sung in the Ngoni language of Tanzania / Mozambique and is one of a series of tracks focussing on smaller tribal musical styles and dialects.

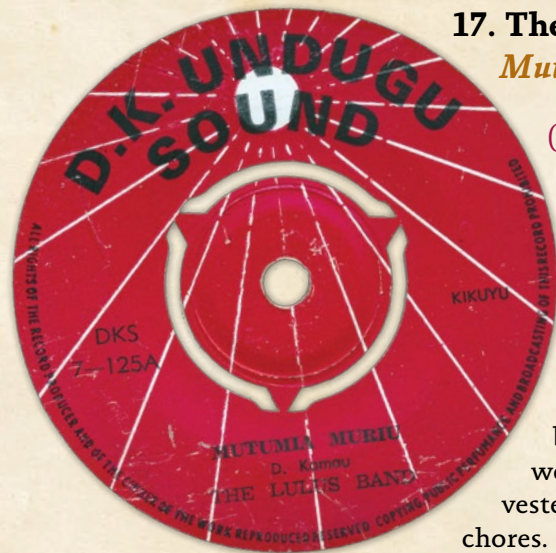


17. The Lulus Band –

Mutumia Muriu

(Kikuyu) Written by D. Kamau. Originally released on a D.K. Undugu Sound Records 45rpm 7" single (DKS7-125) circa 1977/78.

In the traditional rural Kenyan set up, most communities ensured that liquor was the reserve of elderly men and not to be touched by the women. They were the custodians of homesteads, vested with all the usual domestic chores. In this song *Mutumia Muriu* (Drunken Woman), DK raises a red flag on what he sees as the increasingly rampant disregard of this communal 'decree' – as 'urban-bred' women steadily troop to pubs or nightclubs.

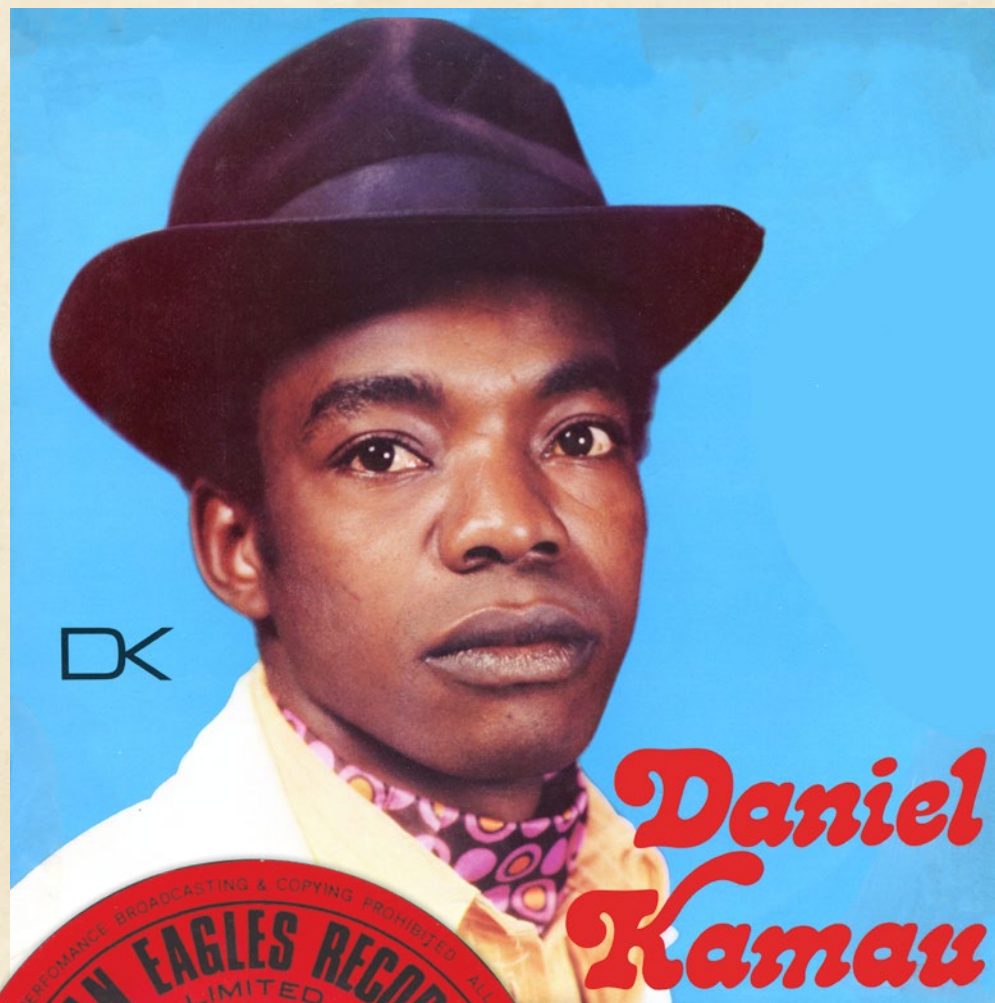


18. Sophia Ben & The Eagles Lupopo – *See Serere*

(Manyema) Written by S. Ben & G.Ochieng. Originally released on an African Eagles Recording Ltd Records 45rpm 7" single (ER60) Circa 1973.

This song, which fuses multiple dialects, is inspired by indigenous folk music popular during traditional dance ceremonies. In her heydays, Sophia Ben was arguably one of Nairobi's song and dance troupes most prominent soloists. She regularly performed folk songs at the 'Bomas of Kenya' cultural centre and the Starlight Club – the

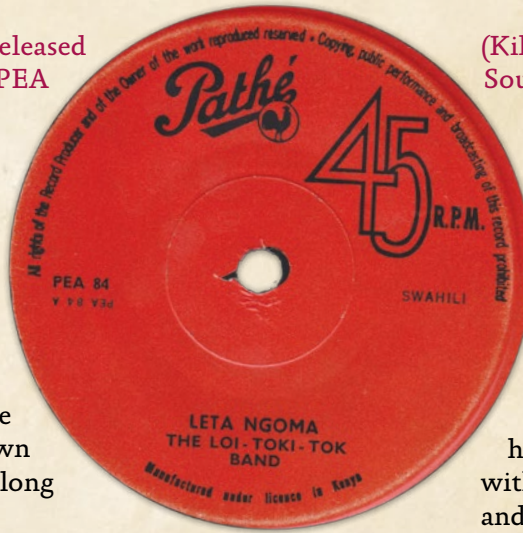
city's entertainment and live music hotspot at the time. The song's multi-lingual lyrics are an influence that would have arisen directly from her collaboration with the Eagles Lupopo Band.



19. The Loi Toki Tok – *Leta Ngoma*

(Swahili) Written by Loi Toki Tok. Originally released on Pathe East Africa Records 45rpm 7" single (PEA 84) circa 1972.

The intermingling of nifty guitar riffs on this blend of Congolese and Kenyan musical influences is deeply original and typical of a very unsung musical outfit that seemed to have become largely forgotten over the years. 'Let's sing, dance and party on to our music' (*ngoma yetu*) the lyric goes. This deep track is indicative of the multi-layered repertoire of The Loi Toki Tok - the resident band at the uptown Arcadia Club (now the Florida Night Club) along Koinange Street in Nairobi.



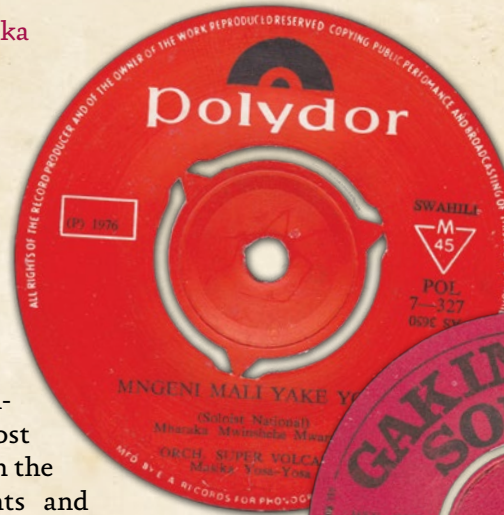
20. Orchestra Super Volcano – *Mngeni Mali Yake Yoke*

(Swahili) Written by Mbaraka Mwinshehe Mwaruka. Originally released on a Polydor East Africa 45rpm 7" single (POL7-327) 1976.

This is a classic song, laden with fluid Franco-esque guitar riffs and an outstanding horn section. The home-grown Swahili *rumba* call-and-response vocals almost pristinely interchange with the honed horns arrangements and conspicuous, exuberant guitar work.

Mbaraka Mwinshehe Mwaruka

Mngeni Mali Yake Yoke's lyrics are sung in a Tanzanian dialect with a sprinkling of Swahili words. The lines draw attention to the significance and appreciation (typical of many African communities) of visitors. Typical of the heady, golden age of Tanzanian *rumba* the distinctive instrumental interplay here defines the Orchestra Super Volcano band's musical identity and trademark.



21. The Rift Valley Brothers – *Tiga Kurira*

(Kikuyu) Written by Joseph Gicheha. Originally released on a Gakindu Boys Sounds 45rpm 7" single (WSS002) Circa 1977/78.

For several years, Joseph Gicheha cut his musical teeth performing alongside DK Mwai in the Lulus Band. This was prior to earning a glowing reputation as a prolific composer and songwriter endowed with an uncanny flair and ability to pen wistful yet witty lyrics. These would easily resonate with a broad spectrum of listeners from the rural grassroots to urban audiences. On this track, *Tiga Kurira* (stop crying), the lyrics reach out to a hurting love, pleading with her to stop crying and take heart, as after a while the pain will ease and everything will be alright.



Joseph Gicheha



22. Kalambya Boys – *Kivelenge*



(Kikamba) Written by J. Mutaiti & O. Musyoki. Originally released on a Kalambya Sounds records 45rpm 7" single (KBS005) 1977.

Kivelenge is a sly daredevil who thrives in breaking rules and regulations, especially those imposed by the authorities. He is also a village 'businessman' and makes a living pulling off illegal deals. This time round the prospects of making quick, easy money drive him to 'invest' in an illicit marijuana plantation grown stealthily along

patches of the Kyulu hills away from public

scrutiny. Within a few months harvest time is nigh, prompting a frantic search for middlemen with muscle and underground connections to distribute the 'herb'. But the deal turns sour as soon as *Kivelenge* pockets the transaction's proceeds and

the village vigilantes who he likely already tipped off, pounce on the dealer.

23. Huruma Boys Band – *Teresia*

(Kikuyu) Written by John Muniko. Originally released on an Oscar Productions Records 45rpm 7" single (OSCA2) Circa 1980.

Teresia is fondly remembered as a popular early 1980s Kikuyu pop hit. The composer blends English and Kikuyu lyrics, a fashionable choice back in the days that would raise a song's listenership. Originally titled *Amerita*, the lyrics are an adoring plea to Teresia not to leave her lover all alone after she pays him a visit. '*Its only for this night that I want you to stay.. I have never told you previously to stay and be here...so don't go away, spend the night with me and respond to my call of love... I need someone to hold me tonight*' the singer pleads. Composer John Muniko is now a prominent gospel artist.



John Muniko

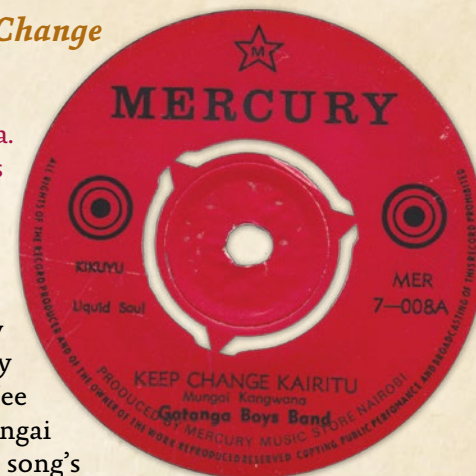


24. Gatanga Boys Band – *Keep Change Kairitu*

(Kikuyu) Written by Mungai Kangwana. Originally released on a Mercury Records 45rpm 7" single (MER7-008) circa 1977/78.

This song's title is almost self explanatory. The lyrics narrate a commonplace trend in social joints, pubs and bars whereby revellers show off temporal monetary endowment. The seasonal tea and coffee harvest bonus payouts in composer Mungai Kangwana's rural home inspired the song's theme. With their pockets bulging heavy with

crisp new banknotes, farmers habitually made a beeline for local pubs to indulge, characterised by reckless spending. Orders for drinks paid in cash, dished out in big denomination notes, would ensure that the bar-tenders reap hefty and generous tips. Hence the song title – *Keep Change Kairitu*, the latter word means young girl, used in reference to female waitresses.

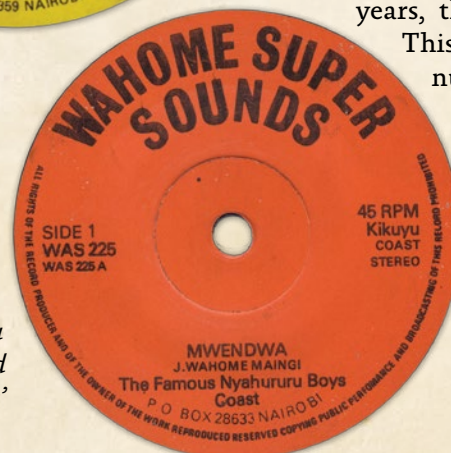


25. The Famous Nyahururu Boys – *Mwendwa*

(Kikuyu) Written by J. Wahome. Originally released on a Wahome Super Sounds 45rpm 7" single (WAS225) Circa 1978.

Wahome Maingi formerly known as James Wahome was, for years, the Famous Nyahururu Boys band's frontman.

This was a group of budding musicians keen to nurture their artistic proficiency – a feat that earned this love song's widespread popularity. With hints of coastal female vocal stylings and a dash of reggae this track is far from the usual Kikuyu fare. Wahome's subsequent modest success rode on the back of a string of Kikuyu hits singles whose melodious tunes resonated easily across the ridges and valleys that traverse Central Kenya, the heartland of Kikuyu music.



26. The Eagles Lupopo – *Pelekani*

(Tumbuka) Written by the Eagles Lupopo. Originally released on an African Eagles Recording Ltd Records 45rpm 7" single (ER60) Circa 1972/3.

The Eagles Lupopo band (aka The African Eagles) was arguably one of the most experienced and professional musical outfits to come out of Kenya and East Africa at this time. On the basis of the song's lyrics, this recording must have featured the third or fourth metamorphosis since being founded in the late 1950s as the Jambo Boys Band (see intro). However the title *Pelekani* bears close resemblance

to the Swahili word '*Peleka*' which

implies 'taking' - arguably, in this context, their music to Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Zaire, Somalia and Sudan. Whatever the origin it's a highly original and progressive track that was way ahead of it's time and completely unique.

27. Ndalani 77 Brothers – *Nzaumi*

(Kikamba) Written by Peter Mutie & Pius Muthaka. Originally released on a Kamukunji Records 45rpm 7" single (KMJ 7-61) 1977.

Nzaumi is an 'average' just-out-of-school, next-door-neighbour girlfriend. All the signs point at a potential relationship, up until word spreads that she is already besotted with someone else. 'My lover why go all the way to Isiolo (a semi-urban town situated over 500 kilometres away from her rural home in Machakos). 'Why not get married closer home in Kikuyu land?' ask Pius Mutie and Peter Muthoka, lead vocalists with the Ndalani 77 Brothers band. The lyrics echo cautionary concerns stirred up by the dilemma of inter-communal marital unions that for generations have been a taboo subject for many East African societies.



28. Afro 70 – *Afrousa (Move On)*

(Swahili) Written by Choyo Godjero. Taken from the AIT /RCA compilation - Afro 70 (1975).

Afro 70 could be regarded as one of Tanzania's least celebrated musical groups in many respects. But the band's classic, but long out-of-print songs such as *Afrousa Move On*, have for years helped sustain their musical flame. This particular song's afro-funk elements bring to the fore Afro 70's uncanny ability to complement their guitar strumming riffs with an adroitly executed infusion of assorted horn lines. In terms of experimenting with various music influences, this song was surely informed by West African 'afro' music.



Peter Mutie - Ndalani Brothers

29. Nairobi Matata Jazz – *Tamba Tamba*

(Swahili) Written by M. Mwaita, Muhina & S. Muhamed. Originally Released on a Diploma Records 45rpm 7" single (DPL 7-025).

Anyone who was a regular night-club goer on the Nairobi scene in the late 1970s, likely harbours lingering golden memories of the time. Back in the days when live indigenous bands ruled the then East African music capital and social scene, Nairobi Matata Jazz (a collective of Kenyan and Congolese instrumentalists), undoubtedly ranked high amongst the most-sought-after musical outfits in town. For several successive months the hit *Tamba Tamba* was a local charts top five hit alongside the other band's tracks like *Zaina* and *Dada Mwajuma*. The song's popularity spread fast, becoming a sure fire crowd puller in night clubs across the city and upcountry urban towns.



30. Kiratu and his Group – *Yanagiria Kayo*

(Kikuyu) Written by S. Kiratu. Originally released on CDKS single (CDKS 001) 45rpm 7" single circa 1976/77.

Kiratu sings here that he has for some years had an illusion that himself and the girl he sings to were no longer just friends but potential lovers. He tries hard not to hurt or wrong the girl of his dreams, hoping, holding on and waiting for her to acknowledge his feelings. But patience is wearing thin; not knowing what she really feels makes him jittery that she will likely let him down. Lately, he has noticed her body language has changed yet she is the only one he's interested in. He recounts the tale of a hyena that gnaws on a piece of bone, symbolic of growing disillusionment that he is being strung along. *Days are fast passing by and we are getting older* – he sings, pleading she reveals what's on her mind lest he continues to languish as a prisoner of unfulfilled love.



31. Afro 70 – *Week End*

Written by Patrick Balisidya. Originally released on a Moto Moto Records 45rpm 7" single (MOTO50) 1972.

Reviews once ranked this track as one of the most memorable of all Tanzanian classics. The kind of song that grows on you and remains as if 'permanently etched in the listener's mind forever'. *"..We welcome all patrons to have fun and enjoy dancing away to our songs repertoire.. it's a our pleasure to entertain revellers on their weekend outings.."*, croons the vocalist. The song's fluid *rumba* pop arrangements and easy tempo have since led people to note that it was way ahead of its time and up there amongst some of the very best of the 1970s Tanzanian songs.



32. The Mombasa Vikings – *Kibe Kibe*

(Kiswahili) Written by Abdalla Hamisi. Originally released on a Beach Rhythm Records 45rpm 7" single (VK-001). Circa 1975.

Once again the coastal *chakacha* rhythm is used here, and is typical of social gatherings or celebrations popular along the Kenyan coast. The fluid, call 'Kibe' and response 'Kibe' keeps a seamless rhythmic flow, ensuring that the soloist, performers and audiences are in synch, moving together. The Mombasa Vikings endeared themselves as a crowd-pulling band owing to this uncanny ability to compel audiences to sing and dance along to their simple yet catchy songs. They were based for some time at the Reef Hotel in Mombasa. Despite little recorded output in Kenya they travelled to Germany in the late 1970s to record an album (*African Songs*) on Einhorn records.



Moi Avenue, Mombasa



Old Town Mombasa



Nairobi skyline

KENYA SPECIAL

Licensing, Kenyan research & liner notes by Emmanuel Mwendwa.

Compiled by Miles Cleret, Johan Fredrik Lavik and Rickard Masip.

Introduction written by Douglas Paterson.(PhD).

Mastering and vinyl restoration by Nick Robbins at Sound Mastering Ltd - nick@soundmastering.co.uk & Frank Merritt @ The Carvery (carverycuts.com)

Front Cover artwork by Lewis Heriz - www.lewisheriz.com / hello@lewisheriz.com / +44(0)7974 950639

Interior layout and design by Johan Fredrik Lavik - www.afro7.net / post@afro7.net / +358452002324

CD1 tracks: 1,3,5,8,9,10,15 & CD2 tracks: 3,12,15 published and licensed from A.I. Records - published by EIT/EMI Publishing.

With many thanks to the following people without whom this album would not have been possible:

Emmanuel Mwendwa, Douglas Paterson.(PhD), Mike Andrews, John Andrews, D. K. Mwai, Mose Fanfan, Frank Merritt, Hugo Mendez, Josephine Zulu (RIP), Guy Morley, Farah Cleret, Mark Babu, Leon Kalle (formerly percussionist Loi Toki Tok band), Dave Mobb, Sammy Thuo, Hadija Nawezi, Jojo (ex-drummer Hodi Boys Band), Sharifa, Tikku, George Fombe, Shaky Gaston, John Muniko, Ebrahim Juma, CDM Kiratu, Charles Kabuga, Joseph Wamumbe, Simon Kihara aka Musaimo, Queen Babito, Moses Kaesa, David Wahome, Mary Njoki, James Kariuki, Zahara, Rashada, Francis Danger, Mohammed Juma, Mandingo, Wilma, Emanuela, Mejemi, Zedd, Ngash, Dr Nick, Perine, Ayub, Harri Kim, Enoque, Anjere Creations, Banko (formerly forvics band), Getmore, Mike, David Ofula, Kajiwe, Monga, Moses, Mwamburi (truck ride), Ngone Mkulima, Reuben, Tom Kalume, Sande, Yusuf Sadiq, Tim Clifford, Bjarne Richard Lavik, Kalumu Nzungula, Mvoi Muthash, Malin Lemström and Nancy Waruguru Kimani.