

# 24 Hours In A Disco – Kiki Gyan



CD/2xLP/Digital SNDW 047

Release date 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012

FILE UNDER: DISCO

Soundway Records present '24 Hours in A Disco 1978 - 82', 7 cuts of relentless disco grooves from the sublimely gifted Kiki Gyan. Hailed as Africa's answer to Stevie Wonder, Ghanaian multi-instrumentalist Kiki Gyan was a musical wunderkind who by 1975 had risen from the lowly status of high school dropout to being ranked eighth in a poll of the greatest keyboardists in the world (occupying the rarefied air of the top ten with heavyweights like Steve Winwood, Billy Preston, and Stevie Wonder) as well as becoming an in-demand session player in the top recording studios of London - all before his twenty-first birthday.

Out on his own, he produced a series of highly ambitious disco records aimed at positioning him as an international star, but weighed down by the excesses of the era, Gyan saw his meteoric rise matched by an equally swift fall back into obscurity. Soundway Records now collects the best of Gyan's work as a frontman and solo artist, featuring an array of electrifying disco grooves that still sound contemporary (and in some cases futuristic) decades after their initial release.



Gyan's debut solo record, 'Doing My Thing', came out in 1977 the year after he had walked out on the afro-rock supergroup Osibisa as a protest to not getting paid properly. A collection of intricately crafted soul and funk with some flights into reggae, 'Doing My Thing' was designed to showcase Kiki's talents as a self-contained singer/songwriter/musician/producer. Assisted by ex-Funkees member Jake Sollo and fellow Ghanaian Kofi Ayivor, Kiki produced most of the sounds on the album by himself, playing various keyboards and synthesizers, as well as bass guitar—an instrument on which he exhibited a distinct voice that was equal parts melodic tenderness and rhythmic thrust.

Not yet twenty-one years old, he had a thriving career as a recording artist and session player, pulling in up to £8000 for a weekend of studio work. And he played as hard as he worked, partying with the cream of rock royalty in drug-fueled bacchanalia on yachts and private jets.

For their next record Kiki and Kofi Ayivor responded to the tenor of the times by recording '24 Hours in a Disco,' a gargantuan dance record that juxtaposed the swooping strings and falsetto vocals of the most processed Eurodisco with Kiki's vicious slap bass grooves, Kofi's percolating congas and sudden, aggressive barrages of disembodied handclaps that evoked a deeper, darker African feeling.

In 1979, after relocating to Lagos, he released the LP 'Feeling So Good', featuring several tracks that followed the heavy disco formula established on '24 Hours.' Switching to Decca Records, Kiki formed the KG Band with his brother Kojo 'Jojo' Gyan, producing the deep dancefloor opus 'Disco Train' and the inspirational album YOU.

By 1983, Kiki was in New York, recording his album *Feelin' Alright*. While his composition and playing skills appeared to be in fine form, Kiki's drug use was taking a toll on him physically. Never a powerhouse vocalist, his voice was now thin, strained and croaky. The track 'Rosemary' nevertheless became a hit in Nigeria and Ghana but his fortunes were declining, and Kiki dived into the New York party scene and blew all his money on drugs.

Broke and struggling with a serious drug habit, Kiki returned to Ghana and became a familiar, ragged presence on the streets of Accra where he bummed around for change and told stories of all the fabulous ways he had squandered more than two million pounds in just a few years. Loved dearly by his contemporaries and sorely missed since his death in 2005 the story of the life of Kofi Kwarko 'Kiki' Gyan is one often told with warning by his friends to the new generation of aspiring Ghanaian popstars.

**Compiled by Miles Cleret. Full liner notes by Uchenna Ikonne available on request.**

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