
TAL NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Tal National is from Niamey, the capital city of Niger. They've had several #1 songs in their home country, are constantly featured on national TV - folks in Niger leave their TV's on and use them as boomboxes - and yet they sell their discs on the street, at roundabouts, since there is no distribution system in the country.

And they are a domestic phenomenon. The last cd pressing was meant to last for weeks (the band normally play five shows per week, each lasting for five hours, all across the region), but they sold out in a day. Niger is West Africa's largest nation, and one of the world's poorest. Resting between Mali and Nigeria, and not far from Ghana, it enjoys a greatly varied mix of cultures and ethnicities, all richly steeped in music. Hence it is no stranger to highlife music, kora music, afrobeat, while giving the world 'Tuareg Blues' and its own brand of hip hop. Now Tal National are bringing something entirely new to the table, and the population grow increasingly unified in their passion for it.

In this joyously hypnotic, highly unique contribution to West African guitar music, with its lightening fast rhythms and rotating cast of vocalists, can be heard the history of Niger as a cultural crossroads along ancient trade routes. Collected within the former French colony can be found Songhai, Fulani, Hausa, and Tuareg populations, all of whom are represented in Tal National's members. In the music we hear the rolling 12/8 rhythms in the Hausa's Fuji percussion, the pensive aridity of the Tuareg's assouf or "blues," and the exquisite "griot guitar" of Mali's Songhai, all delivered with virtuoso precision and unrelenting energy.

On stage Tal National perform with six musicians, but because of their rigorous performance schedule there might be up to thirteen members at any one time. At shows, musicians regularly change places midway through songs (including the amazing sight of drummers swapping without missing a beat). On some nights the band might split up to play two gigs simultaneously. Their concert material combines original songs with new arrangements of West African folk songs, themes of which deal with love, tolerance, peace, feminine beauty, and the woman's physical dance expression based on traditional African rhythms.

The band is driven by the charismatic, forward-thinking bandleader, Hamadal "Almeida" Moumine, who also teaches at the local SOS Children's Village twice a week, serves as a judge in local courts, and had a successful soccer career before becoming Niger's best-loved guitarist. Turning a dust-covered, half-abandoned studio into their rough-and-ready home base with help from Chicago-based producer Jamie Carter, Tal National laid down tracks all day, only to dash off to five-hour shows later in the evening. Carter sent the tracks along to FatCat, and the open-eared label got it.

He formed the band in 2000, they recorded their first album, Apokte, in 2006 and it was well received at home. Then, wanting the follow-up to be a better quality recording, and realizing it was cheaper to fly an engineer with remote-recording capabilities to Niamey than for the band to travel to the nearest studio (in Nigeria or Ghana), Almeida recruited Chicago-based recording engineer Jamie Carter, whom he met during the Chicago Calling arts festival. The result was 2008's 'A-Na Waya', an album that became hugely successful in Niger. This album

firmly established Tal National as the premier band of Niamey. The record stood out in the domestic market, for both the quality of its sound (a big issue in a country where it's impossible to buy instruments, where there is no studio that can handle a live band, nor competent engineers), and also for the integration of traditional instruments like the talking drum. Many beyond Niger took notice through YouTube, with three videos from 'A-na Waya', each passing 100,000 views.

In January 2011 Almeida brought Carter back to Niamey record the album before you. Kaani was captured over two weeks at the run-down Studio Maibianigarba in Niamey. Despite most of the equipment being broken, a layer of dust covering every surface and mosquitoes dwelling in every corner, the dilapidated facility was acoustically an ideal environment. Carter was able to set up the equipment he brought with him and capture the magic of the group, spending days with the doors of the control room wide open to provide ventilation, and also to let in the vibrancy of the city. The band would record until 5pm, then get ready for their five-hour performance later that night.

Having signed to FatCat in April 2013, they are excited to fulfill their dream of touring outside of Niger, to promote both their music and the Nigerien culture in general. They will be touring the states throughout the fall, including stops at the Chicago World Music Festival in September and many others. All dates will be announced soon. And we couldn't be more excited...

All band members currently live in Niamey, Niger.

Real Name / Stage Name / Instrument

Almeida / Guitar

Maty / Drums

Longueur / Bass

Yac Tal / Bass

Babaye / Guitar

Omar / Drums

Keljue / Talking drum

Souleymane / Vocals

Seydou / Vocals

Massaoudou / Vocals

Luthord / Vocals

Biri / Drums

Tafa / Guitar