

SPLINTERS & CANDY

Mandingo Ambassadors

by Alex on August 10, 2012



Last summer I went to see the [Mandingo Ambassadors](#) with my girlfriend Anna at [The Falcon](#) in Marlboro, NY. The place was packed with people eager to hear Mamady “Djelike” Kouyaté and his band in action. Mamady Kouyaté is a griot from Guinea who represents a musical tradition that stretches back hundreds of years. He rose to fame during the 1960s and 1970s playing guitar in a number of Guinean dance bands. Ahmed Sékou Touré, president of the newly independent Guinea, sponsored bands to participate in Authenticité, a plan to create a new musical movement by translating traditional Guinean music played on kora and balafon into a modern ensemble comprised of electric guitars, bass, and a drum kit. In 2004, Mamady Kouyaté left Guinea as a political refugee and ended up in Brooklyn. After he arrived, he started a new band with African and American musicians and called the group the Mandingo Ambassadors.

Influenced by bands like Bembeya Jazz, Horoya Band, Keletigui et ses Tambourinis and Balla et ses Balladins, the Mandingo Ambassadors play lively

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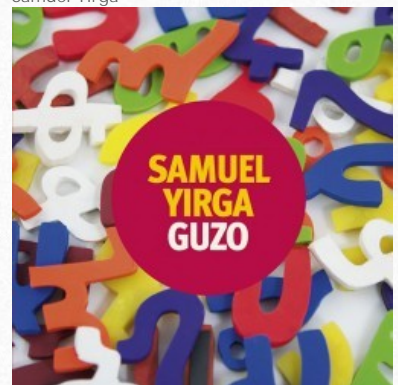
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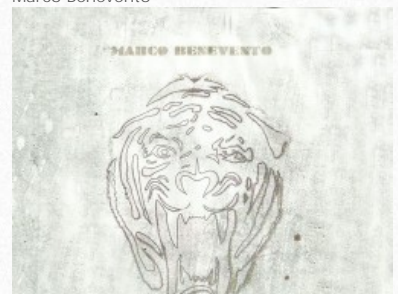
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music with polyrhythmic beats, interlocking guitar riffs and steady woodwinds for Bebe Camara to sing over. Mamady Kouyaté and Mamady Kourouma lay down sweet, fingerpicked guitar grooves while Andy Algire plays his drum kit with steady hi-hats and drum rim hits. Nicholas “Snek” Cudahy’s delicate bass playing steps in and out of the groove while Foluso Mimy’s steady percussion locks everything together. Oran Etkin’s tenor sax & clarinet harmonize well with Sylvain Leroux’s alto sax & flute. Other vocalists have included M’Mah Doumbouya and Ismael Kouyaté.

The Mandingo Ambassadors recently released a new album entitled *Tougna*, which is available on [bandcamp](#). Fueled by their energetic performances, *Tougna* maintains the thrill of a live setting with the clarity of a studio recording. Sample the record above and get out to [Barbès](#) to see the Mandingo Ambassadors perform every Wednesday night.

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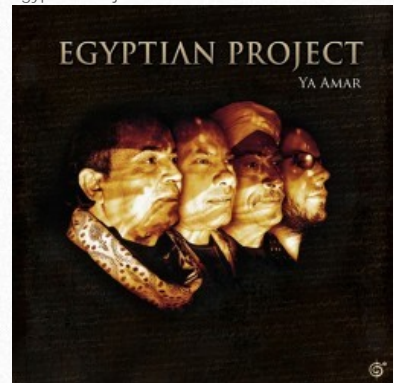
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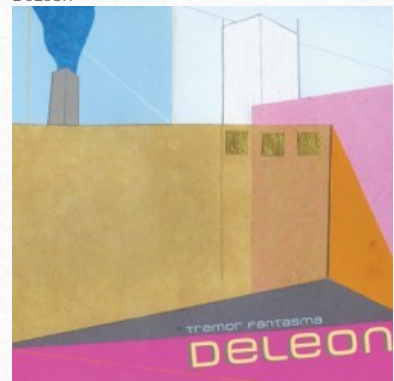
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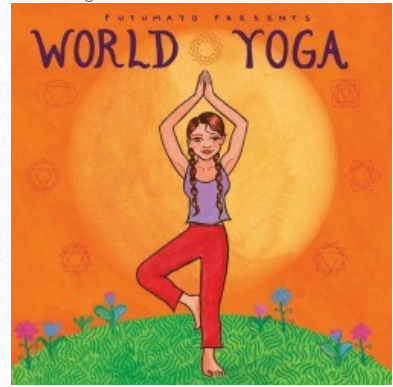


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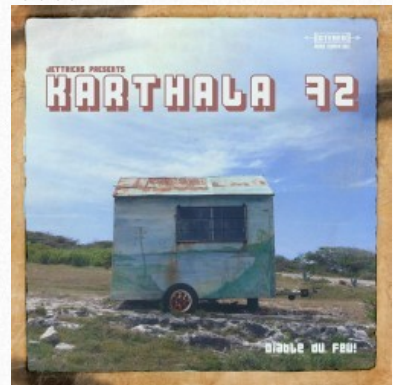




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