



# Amadou & Mariam

Amadou & Mariam, it's above all, a love story. They met 25 years ago at the Institute for the Young Blind in Mali. Since then, they have been on the road together, together in life as well as on the stage. Amadou Bagayoko, is a musician who emerged in the Seventies, at the time of the proclaimed independences, at the time when Mali was overflowing and bubbling with ideas of all kind. There were many adventures, including the one with the Ambassadors, the biggest music band of the West African continent, where Amadou lived for nearly six years. Mariam Doumbia, a born singer, grew up listening to the father's radio and trained her voice whilst singing in the traditional festivals that give pace to everyday life in Mali. Between Amadou, the funky brother, and Mariam, the soul sister, there is the music. A guide that has enabled them to transcend the adversity of a life plunged in the eternal night, in an area of the world under economic perfusion. And then to the Eighties when they moved to Abidjan. It's then that they became popular with their recording tapes that are heard all over the sub-region. It is the beginning of a success story that does not owe anything to chance, where hard work ends up paying off sometimes. Since then, the young couple became happy parents and arrived in France, with a refrain which did not take long in making them famous: « Je t'aime mon amour, ma chérie... » ("I love you my love, my darling..."). Since 1998, they have toured heavily, in France and then in the United States. With three albums released and through hundreds of concerts, Amadou & Mariam have imposed their double first name, without forcing, with naturalness. An indestructible couple, which today sing again on "M'Bifé", the sweet song introducing and ending the album: « Chérie, je t'aime jusqu'à la mort » ("Honey, I love you until death").

Amadou & Mariam, it's most of all a history of friendship. "We are always very open to sharing with the others, ready for meeting people. It is always necessary to create fusions". Amadou has retained the lesson of the big orchestras with the variable geometry and geography of the Seventies. He draws with this inexhaustible source of inspiration, whilst welcoming new friends, those that he met during these tours in France and beyond. Guests who have appeared in each one of their albums and who have joined them on stage.

It is difficult to name all of those with whom they have exchanged, the time of a song: Herbert Grönemeyer, Sergeant Garcia, -M-, Hamid El Kasri, Jean-Philippe Rikiel, Moriba Koité... Musicians of all cultures gathered together for the god of the groove, seduced by the storytelling qualities of Amadou & Mariam. This friendship, is one that they have often mentioned in their songs. It is a solid base, a vaccine against all the diseases. As they say: "Please let us not be perverse between us...". "Dimanche à Bamako" ("Sunday in Bamako"), it is still and always will be a history of shared feelings. They joined Herbert Grönemeyer for the official FIFA World Cup anthem 2006. Grönemeyer enthusiastic: "...having Amadou & Mariam joining the project together with their band was great for me..."

"...it is a wonderful song, and this whole project really was a stroke of luck..."

With Cheik-Tidiane Seck, their friend of more than thirty years, the eclectic keyboard player of many Pan African adventures; with Jimmy Bouba, the blind bass player, the class personified with his funny galure and its permanent swaying walk; with Tiken Jah Fakoly, the singer of angry reggae, the neighbour of the Ivory Coast and now taking refuge in Bamako; with Mamadou, "soon famous" kid... And with all the others. For this new chapter of Amadou & Mariam's career, there is also Manu Chao, who fell for the charms of a song from their preceding album – "Chauffeurs" ("Drivers"), an afro-funk tour which could raise a legless cripple from ground! – as he was driving on the Parisian freeway. As a consequence, he met them, and then decided to sit behind the desk of the studio wear the cap of producer. This did not prevent him from joining them in front of the microphone for many songs on the album.

Amadou & Mariam, it is also about stories, small and large, told in words and music. Those of the legendary "Coulibaly", to remember the great hours of the empire since broken up, those of everyday life in Bamako, lived on board a taxi, those also that celebrate the festival at the village, those that give its title to the album, which recalls the lines between the importance of the big strings and the small drums... But in this album, as in the previous ones, Amadou & Mariam are making themselves the witnesses of their time, engaging on the political ground. Condemning this real politic which "requires blood, tears, ignorance, lies, lives...", stigmatizing the tough "Réalité" (Reality) of a world too much in black and white, mentioning the problems of the uprooted people on "Senegal fast-Food", singing the praises of "peace", while claiming for "solidarity between people," Malians, men from the Ivory Coast, Burkinabese, Mauritians, Senegalese, Guineans, Ghanaians "... Beyond these words, it is their music which brings the best response to all these evils: a music made of exchanges, without borders and blinkers, the heart open to innovations and the ears attentive to traditions.

With a new album set for release in early summer 2008, it doesn't seem like the story is about to end.