NEO DUO

Mehdi Nabti / Lionel Kizaba

Etudes Africaines

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Mehdi Nabti alto sax, morrocan flute nira
Lionel Kizaba drums, mbondas, djitumba, vocals

Produced by par Mehdi Nabti

Recorded by Alban Maréchal and Jean Beaumier
Koalamusik Studio, Montreal, QC, Canada
3 and 4 August 2015

Mixing and Editing by Alban Marshal
Mastering by Jean Beaumier

Photos of Mehdi Nabti and Lionel Kizaba by Delphine Gaillard (2013)
Algerian Sahara by Mehdi Nabti (2007)
Double Dogon mask (1897) by Museum of Primitive Art (Paris)

Compositions by Mehdi Nabti
Lyrics and Congolese songs (Lingala) by Lionel Kizaba
Socan Music 2015

Made in Canada

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mehdi nabti

lionel kizaba

Too often addressed through folklore and nostalgia,
the African musical heritage remains rarely studied and valued for its technical and emancipatory potential.

These "African Studies" are inspired by the ancient and medieval history sub-Saharan and Maghreb.

Based on the groove, interaction and improvisation, this music is not 'free jazz' or folklore.
It's a music composed, structured and thought upstream in a precise approach.

But it is primarily a music today, rooted in the Maghreb cultural heritage and sub-Saharan Africa :
the forgotten history, vernacular dialects, ancestral rhythms, musical techniques
(melodic modes, forms and structures, calls and responses) are for us a source of diverse creativity.

This music is the sound of our identity.

Al-Ifriqiyya

Al-Ifriqiyya is a part of the territory of North Africa during the period of the Western Middle Ages, corresponding to African Roman provinces in Late Antiquity: Tunisia, eastern Algeria and western Libya. The 5/4 rhythm is a Berber trance rhythm called al-Filali (Tafilelt region, Morocco). The flute melody is a compilation of various "musical routines", "folk matrices" in North African. The text is in Congolese dialect (Lingala).

Translation of Congolese vocals (Lingala)

They (the political leaders) who have just arrived, they have a bad heart (x2)

I and those who are elsewhere, leave us alone, Stay away from us. We do not want to know anything about you. Stay away

MS

For my baby daughter Syna this is a lullaby written on a Moroccan rhythm in 10/4 called "ftuh lmjerred" (Brotherhood of Aissawa, medieval times) played by the snare drum. The piece alternates between soothing melody and improvisation battery, symbolizing the vital force of a becoming life, full and rich.
Soloist: Lionel Kizaba.

Hamadcha Mix 1

Melodies and improvisations on a 5/4 Moroccan trance rythm called 'gdari' (Hamadcha brotherhood, medieval times). The placing of the melody and the improvisation using a call is a characteristic technic of collective playing in african trance music. The modes used for melodie and improvisation are: minor 7b9, hijaz mode, tone scales, Ionian mode. The flute loop is a 5/4 riff in in F#.
Soloist: Mehdi Nabti.

Epigraphy

Getting sound of a North African antique inscription (-138 BC)
assigned to the Numidian king Micipsa where two Berber alphabets
are written : the Libyan and Punic (Phoenician). The melody (16 beats)
symbolises the 16 handwritten letters. The melodic loop, based on a tetrachord
(4 notes) is typical of the Berbers work songs.
The harmonization, alternately in fourth and sixth with variations in the unison,
symbolizes both alphabets and the indeterminacy in the correspondences of the
epigraphy. The drums improvisation symbolizes both creativity
and permanent backwater life.

Afro-berber

Improvised exchanges alternate with a riff in 4/4 on the hijaz mode.
The final song is a Congolese Lingala. A title corresponds to a
improvised musical encounter, a "jam" as it is often practiced with some
friends musicians.
Soloists: Mehdi Nabti and Lionel Kizaba.

Translation of Congolese vocals (Lingala)

Sing, sing, we will all leave the country quietly (x2)
Everyone leaves the country
Please, come back in the country
Our country full of wealth

Ndate Yalla

A musical evocation of Ndate Yalla (1810-1860), the last great queen of the
Waalo (northwest of present Senegal). She's a heroine of resistance
the French colonization, the equivalent of the famous Berber Kahina.
The 6/4 rhythm used to build the song (played by the saxophone riff
during the drum solo) is borrowed from the Senegalese folklore.
Soloists: Mehdi Nabti and Lionel Kizaba.

Translation of Congolese vocals (Lingala)

Look at me, I'm coming to get you. O the eldest!
You are far away, but I keep looking for you. O the eldest!

Tiedos

A thought for the Tiedos, warriors of the ancient kingdoms of Senegal.
Refractory to attempts of Islamization, Christianization and colonization,
these rebels were a rural aristocracy with chivalrous values. The 6/4 rhythm
is the same as for "Ndate Yalla", but this is a ballad. The soloist calls his c
ompanion who joins him for support. The saxophone improvises on a
"Coltrane Cycle" slightly modified (G-7/BbMaj/C-7/GbMaj/B-7/Dmaj/G-7).
Soloist: Mehdi Nabti.

Hangbe

Erased from official history of Dahomey (Benin), the queen Hangbe was
the only woman who ruled this area. So we know very little of this queen.
The drums groove in 9/4 comes from the Vaudoun rite, but altered and
slowed. The saxophone improvises on two separate tones of a semitone
(Bb-7/Bmaj7) symbolizing the queen Hangbe and her twin brother Akaba,
who reigned before her.
Soloist: Mehdi Nabti.

Yemma Gourayya

Yemma Gourayya, "protector of the mountains" is, according to the myths
Berber in Algeria the burial place of Aya, daughter of a leader of a Byzantine chief.
She's now became the patron saint the city of Bejaia. This mountain overlooking
the Mediterranean kabyle city hosts a 18th century Spanish fort. The ABA structure
of this piece is characteristic of kabyle festive songs. The 7/4 rhythm is a modified
berber rhythm. The mode melodic is hijaz mode on F and F # for the bridge.
Soloists: Mehdi Nabti and Lionel Kizaba.

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Mehdi Nabti alto sax, moroccan flute nira
Lionel Kizaba drums, mbondas, djitumba, voix

African Studies

01	Ndaté Yalla	02.34
02	Hamadcha Mix 1	03.08
03	Ifriqiyya	03.59
04	Hangbé	02.13
05	Épigraphie	01.31
06	Afro-berbère	02.09
07	Tiédos	03.35
08	MS	02.29
09	Yemma Gourayya	03.22

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