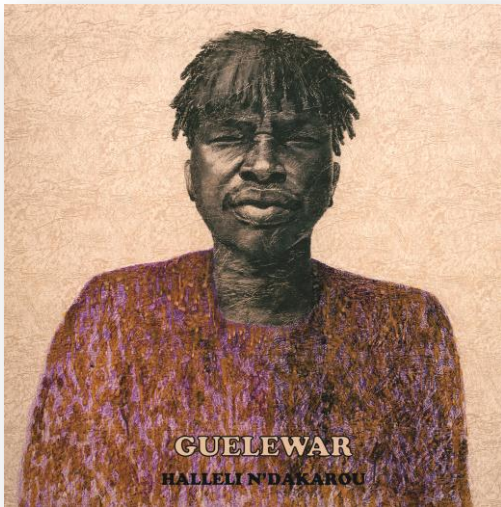


Presents:

GUELEWAR – HALLELI N'DAKAROU

Released on CD, 2LP & Digital on **October 3rd 2011**

(Including 10 previously unreleased and fully licensed tracks)



TERANGA BEAT proudly presents legendary group **GUELEWAR** from Banjul, The Gambia. Amongst the most experimental, psychedelic bands out of Africa, GUELEWAR offer a unique sound and instrumentation, mixing traditional compositions with modern instruments such as the Mini-MOOG. Here in their last recording, live in the "**Canari Club de Kaolack**", Senegal 1982, the 12 members guide you to another level. The liner notes include more information outlining the beautiful story of this exceptional band from this distinctive West African country, The Gambia. We hope you will enjoy.

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THE STORY by Adamantios Kafetzis (Teranga Beat Founder)

As an African music collector I have listened to many different types of music and learnt about different cultures from Africa; I would say that the differences in African music have more to do with regions than with a country, though in general, there are commonalities in the music since the 80s, due to the huge influence of the Congolese rhythms. GAMBIA, the smallest country in Africa is surrounded by SENEGAL, so I wouldn't expect anything very different in their music to neighbouring countries, as they share the same instruments with all from within the Manding Kingdom. The discography of the country is very small; **IFANG BONDI** and **GUELEWAR** are the two main bands. When I first listened to their records I was shocked, it was the most unique sound I have ever heard; nothing else from Africa has sounded like this. I had one LP from the **SUPER EAGLES** who later became IFANG BONDI and who released two LPs and four LPs from the more experimental band the GUELEWAR.

When I started searching the recording reels in Senegal I was hoping to find something from Gambia, either a recording from those groups or even something totally undiscovered. My dream came true and I found both; a live recording of GUELEWAR and a recording of a group called **KARANTAMBA** where the "Chef d' Orchestre" was the IFANG BONDI guitar player **BAI JANHA**. This recording was totally unreleased. I was amazed by both recordings and decided to work on their release. I had the music but I had no further information about these two bands; for KARANTAMBA it seemed normal as the music was unreleased, but for GUELEWAR who had already released four LPs it appeared strange; the only thing I could find was the names of the band members, nothing else, not even one photo of the band. The mystery was resolved when I finally decided to travel down to Gambia where a very pleasant surprise was waiting for me.

During the heavy rain period in West Africa throughout August, embarking on the worst trip I have ever endured, I took a "7 place Taxi" from Dakar to go down to Gambia. I had already spoken on the phone to BAI JANHA and **MOUSSA NGOM**, the lead singer of GUELEWAR and they were waiting for me. The first night I met BAI in a restaurant where we had our first conversation; I was really happy and surprised to find out that BAI JANHA is the MOST important musician in GAMBIA. He was involved in the creation of all the bands from the country; BAI JANHA, alias the "Sweet Fingers" created his first band in the 60s, the **BLACK STAR** band and after a while the **WHALES** band. He then created the **FABULOUS EAGLES** band that later split into the **SUPREME EAGLES** and the famous **SUPER EAGLES of PAPS TOURÉ**. Then the **GAMBIA POLICE** band, the **LORDS** band, in 1970 he created the **ALLIGATORS** band that later became the **SUPER ALLIGATORS** band and in 1972 they then changed their name to GUELEWAR. He stayed with the band until 1975 and after a while he joined the IFANG BONDI, after



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that the **TAMBATO** band and finally in the 80s he created the **KARANTAMBA INTERNATIONAL** band. I shall give you full information about BAI JANHA and the KARANTAMBA on the next TERANGA BEAT release.

The next day I visited MOUSSA NGOM who was the singer of GUELEWAR to discuss the possibility of releasing the recording. Both MOUSSA and BAI asked me to visit **LAYE NGOM**, cousin of MOUSSA and "Chef d'Orchestre" at the time when GUELEWAR recorded those LPs. We spent a lot of time all together talking about the glory days of the band. In the late 60s when BAI was band leader of the SUPREME EAGLES they used to play in a cinema called the "**ODEON**". They were playing a lot Soul music, mostly covers and always had as a reference OTIS REDDING. Then somebody told BAI that there is a guy who sings OTIS REDDING very well and he asked him to allow him to sing a song during a gig. BAI said why not! So the guy sung one song and was very good. That guy was LAYE NGOM; at the time the band wanted to reach a greater level as they faced strong competition from the SUPER EAGLES so they asked BAI to keep LAYE in the band and he accepted.

There was a Lebanese friend of BAI who has done a lot of good things for music in Gambia called **ANTOINE TABAL**; ANTOINE wanted to build a big club in Gambia so he offered instruments to BAI and his group in order to come and play at the club. BAI was happy about the proposition as it was very difficult for groups in those years to have proper instruments and thus he accepted the offer straight away. It was the largest, most successful night club in Gambia ever, the "**BAMBO No1 Night Club**". ANTOINE called the group the ALLIGATORS. After a while some of the members decided to create their own club so they left and the members who stayed decided, on Saturday 22nd of May in 1971, to change the name to SUPER ALLIGATORS. At that time the band wanted to move away from the influence of foreign music and was the first to incorporate and popularize authentic Gambian music, in particular Kora and Mbalax music. The SUPER ALLIGATORS and the SUPER EAGLES were the pioneers and innovators of Mbalax and Afro-Manding sounds, these forms being the roots of Senegambia and Mali's musical traditions. After this group had to change to an African name, so they renamed the band to GUELEWAR. It was then and because of this combination that they created this UNIQUE sound of Gambia.

GUELEWAR stayed together for only three years; they disbanded in 1975. It was during those three years that BAI JANHA composed and arranged all the songs of the band with LAYE NGOM, but the band did not record any of the songs due to the lack of recording facilities. At that time there was a great Senegalese guitar player with the band ABDOU AZIZ (PAPE) SECK from Thies, who later created the amazing **DIEUF DIEL de THIES**. In the last year of the band MOUSSA NGOM joined the group. MOUSSA was singing circumcision songs and came from a Griot family. The first wife of BAI knew MOUSSA and asked him to bring him into the band. He was also the cousin of LAYE. This melancholy within the sound of GUELEWAR comes from these traditional circumcision songs. LAYE was singing the English songs and MOUSSA was singing in Wolof. So they started arranging the songs for MOUSSA. "Sama Yaye Demna Ndar" was written by BAI for the daughter of his wife's elder sister, who was singing a song called "Safikero", in that song she sung "Sama Yaye Demna Ndar" which means "My Mother Left for Saint-Louis". The author of that song was the mother of PAPS TOURÉ. It was in the BAMBO night club where MOUSSA joined the band; one year later BAI left for London but didn't stay for a long time.

LAYE asked BAI to reform the group again but BAI decided to join the IFANG BONDI group instead. So LAYE NGOM reformed as **GUELEWAR II** with MOUSSA as lead singer and they continued playing together; at the end of the 70s they decided to make an album. They recorded the same tracks they were playing in the years until 1975 with BAI JANHA. LAYE was not happy with the recording but decided to license it for two years to M. Haidar, who released the "Sama Yaye Demna N'Darr" LP. They record again but LAYE is still not satisfied. Finally without any license or agreement with the group, somebody took the recordings and out of them, they released 3 LPs in 1980-81. This is why there is no photo of the band in any of the LPs and each one appears on a different record label. LAYE was naturally furious about it; finally they decided to do a recording in 1982 to release a cassette with the producer MASS DIOKHANE of TOUBA CASSETTE. One week before the recording LAYE left the Gambia for political reasons and went to Helsinki in Finland. The band went to Senegal in Kaolack where they played Live in the club of MASS, the "**CANARI de KAOLACK**" club. The band leader was MOUSSA who had written his songs also. Under his guidance they recorded Live in the club "**HALLELI NDAKAROU**" which was released in 1982 in two Volumes Cassettes; the band stayed together for one more year. MOUSSA then left for Senegal to join OMAR PENE's **SUPER DIAMONO**. More details about his life can be discovered in his interview which follows.

The recording was made with four microphones straight to a four channel multi-track reel to reel machine. The reel was in a terrible condition, but I managed to take the music out of it. When it came to the mastering we tried to keep the LIVE feeling of the recording. I hope you will enjoy it.



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