

THE ROUGH GUIDE to

# African Street Party

'Street' means different things to different people, especially where music is involved. To many, it means music that can be played spontaneously, in the street; that is. But to most music consumers all over the world (including Africa) it means what the North American media industry understands by the term: contemporary, urban black music, hip-hop and modern R&B.

Now, the African music industry is inundated with first-rung hip-hop, bashment and R&B acts. In Nigeria there's 2Face (recent winner of the 2007 UK Mobo Award, African Music Section), D'Banj, Eedris Abdulkareem (who famously picked a fight on the Lagos Airport tarmac with American hip-hop star 50 Cent—and won), Africa China and countless others. The Lagos and Ife airwaves are replete with 24/7 R&B shows, and the DJs have ready-made cod-American accents. In Ghana,

the home of Hiplife (hip-hop/highlife), there's Reggie Rockstone chatting over 1970s Frimpong Afrobeat samples, comic rapper Lord Kenya selling 100,000 of each cassette, V.I.P. adding Christian thanksgiving to life's everyday thrills and spills, Tic Tac and Batman battling it out for lyrical supremacy, and world-level producers such as Zapp Mallet. Uganda possesses one of Africa's fastest-growing (and, some say, one of the most professional) urban music industries, documenting the talent from Nairobi and Dar as well as Kampala, while South Africa's popular music community has always been a technical match for anything that the USA, Jamaica or the UK can field, in house, *kwaito* and techno as well as hip-hop, R&B and gospel.

In Francophone and Lusophone Africa, the story's similar. Senegal keeps the hip-hop flavour 'street'

by harnessing Wolof and Mbalax traditions to political and social commentary. In the new wave of *djembine* DJs, Mali boasts arguably Africa's first genuine remix DJs working in true African spirit – such as MO DJ, whose deliberately lo-fi beatbox samples and punky cut-ups call to mind the early 1980s Bronx days of Afrika Bambaataa and DJ Steinsky.

Congo has produced something very different: Konono No. 1 and their many imitators play traditional street music using all the psych-rock feedback and distortion techniques of Jimi Hendrix, Syd Barrett, the Soft Machine and John Cage.

By contrast, Angola has come up with some of Africa's first genuine all-electronic, computer-keyboard based music. Developed originally by

America-based Tony Amado and the many Afro-Lisbon sound systems from a mixture of traditional Angolan *Carnaval Do Arasu* percussion and techno beats, *kuduru* and *tarraxinha* have swept Lusophone Africa as well as the Portuguese, North American and Parisian Luso-African diaspora. They have also inspired a similar movement among Capo Verde's enormous pool of youthful talent, who realise that there's life beyond B. Leza and Cesaria Evora, in the form of Capo-love (zouk-love meets *morna*) and techno-fied versions of traditional *funaná* and *coladeira* rhythms.

Neither have Somalia and Ethiopia been left behind, with Italian-Somalian urban diva Saba, Canadian-Somalian hip-hop superstar K'Naan and Ethiopian-New York crew Bole 2 Harlem leading East Africa's new fusions and directions.

Exuberant, spontaneous and spirited

# African Street Party

crank up the volume and  
dance the night away



Last, and most important (in terms of record sales if not of musical quality), Ivorian *coupé décalé* (in soccer, 'cut and strike') has taken over the whole West African club scene, with its please-all recipe of soukous, *ndombolo*, zouk, *zouglou*, *mapouka* and bashment.

To the Western musicological orthodoxy, with its patronizing distaste for anything mass-produced or urban, and uncritical reverence for anything based on *la grande* tradition (no matter how jejune or lacking in merit), much of this is greeted with dismay. Of course, the truth is that Afropop has always been fusion – and the diverse musical riches described above are simply more, and newer, fusions. Ask any young African whether he or she prefers hip-hop or village funeral music... you can guess the answer.

But that isn't meant to denigrate traditional African music. Far from it, because that's where our second strain of 'street' comes from: post-ceremony parties of birth and death, of marriage and naming, puberty and homage, harvest and rainmaking. It's natural to listen to the programmed carnival beats of Dog Murras back to back with Kenge Kenge's age-old Benga exaltation; there's no jarring effect, no apprehension that the two styles don't 'fit'. On the contrary – they're contrasting expressions of the same ecstasy, because they're performed with palpable sincerity and love. The merest hint of disingenuity serves to negate such music immediately.

Traditional African street music is still alive and well in many forms. In Nigeria, Fuji is almost as popular as R&B with young Nigerians, and 1950s

Palmwine stylists such as Fatai Rolling Dollar are returning to the consciousness of the Nigerian university and student generation who have tired of aping North American fashion and stereotype. In Sierra Leone, Oloh's Milo Jazz Band may have passed away long ago, but their influence is felt without any trace of shame or embarrassment by Freetown's hip-hop youth.

In Paris's grim *banlieues*, multinational African hip-hop crews such as 113 (named after the postcode) and Malian-Parisian Mokobé draw on traditional music samples from back home as a means of self-discovery, political statement and social identity in an increasingly pitiless urban landscape, just as some of the best Capo Verdean dance music comes out of expatriate colonies in Rotterdam and Boston.

So, given the riches on offer, this selection serves as nothing more than a snapshot, a close-up of a few areas of particular interest and activity in the total picture for 2007–8. This time next year, there will be a whole new crop. That's the beauty of genuine tradition: paradoxically, it never stands still.

**VIIEUX FARKA TOURÉ** – The immediate attraction of this tune as a true Afro-street party contender was not so much the artist – respectable, but not groundbreaking in the highly competitive field of Sahel dance music – but more the remixer. Nickodemus started life in the early 1990s as a reggae/hip-hop/breakbeat DJ in Manhattan, eventually finding a spiritual home at a disused ice-skating rink right on the Hudson bank. The legendary Turntables On The Hudson era began, and Nico made the move to the Lower East Side,

Vieux Farka Touré



Massukos



Richard Lemvo



where the Latin influences evidently took over. Nickodemus's current record label, Wonderwheel Recordings, is a Pandora's box of remixed tropical beats from Colombia to Africa, as well as party-hardy disco-funk and Stevie Wonder-inspired boogie. Of all the North American and European breakbeat DJs who have adopted African, Latin and Brazilian music in search of something fresh, Nickodemus is one of the few who seems to have 'heard' it properly. Remixing tropical dance music is more than just grafting a 125bpm lick on to an Afro sample (remember those truly unlistenable house remixes of Cesaria Evora a few years back?), and Nico has learned the lesson early. He takes the basic track, gives it a slight *merengue/soukous* twist, but then subtly jacks up the house element towards the climax.

**MASSUKOS** – Hailing from Niassa in the north of the country, Massukos are one of Mozambique's most venerable institutions, as well as being one of the hottest live bands in southern Africa. A brilliant performance at WOMAD 2007 brought the release of *Bumping*, an album that showcases their highly versatile live shows. The songs mix traditional Mozambican street rhythms and styles with touch of Zimbabwean jit-jive and South African pop, as well as Lusophone African crowd-pleasers such as this superb track 'Ntolilo'. Feliciano dos Santos, their leader, has a day job as head of NGO Estamos, and the band travel to the most remote villages to play their music, with its messages of safe sex, sanitation and hygiene.

**LUISITO QUINTERO FEAT FRANCIS MBAPPE** – It may be a slight cheat to include a Venezuelan percussionist on an African street album, but with Luisito Quintero's faultless feel for Cameroonian bassist/vocalist Francis Mbappe's turbo-Afrobeat performance, who's counting? Luisito has worked with titans of the Latin world such as Tito Puente, the Fania All Stars, Marc Anthony, Ray Barretto and Gloria Estefan. Vocalist Henri Francis Mbappe Mabole Elessa was first a jazz/funk/rock bass prodigy at 19, playing with Manu Dibango, Herbie Hancock and Fela Kuti. A regular at New York's Zinc Bar Afro Nights, Francis has also just released his solo acoustic album, *Celebration*, which pays homage to the great composers of acoustic Cameroonian music such as Eboa Lotin and Francis Bebey.

**COLOMBIAFRICA – THE MYSTIC ORCHESTRA** – Champeta is the first contemporary Afro-Colombian music genre, the result of a four-century-long history of musical exchanges between Africa and Colombia. In the 1960s, the Afro communities of the Caribbean coast discovered popular African music – highlife, soukous, *mbaqanga* and other Haitian rhythms. These records reached the port of Cartagena, on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, through the influx of travellers and sailors, and generated a huge musical movement, unpredictable and unique in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Afro-Colombians created their own versions of Congolese soukous, highlife and other modern African rhythms, fusing them with the folklore of the *cumbia*, *bullerengue*, *chalupe* and other

Caribbean styles. This fusion, completely unique in its genre, was called *Champeta* criolla, a movement inspired by popular African music and readapted in Afro-Colombia. Three years in the making, the album *Voodoo Love Inna Champeta Land* – from which this track is taken – finds Colombian Champeta stars Viviano Torres, Luis Towers and Justo Valdez jamming with African legends Dally Kimoko, Dibo Dibala, Sékou Diabaté, Nyboma and Rigo Star, bringing roots Afro-Colombian grooves back home to African soil.

**LA MC MALCRIADO** – If it appears that Lusophone African dance music is slightly overrepresented on this selection, it's partly because it's currently very creative, but also because it's been inexplicably ignored for too long by the Anglophone music press, who refuse to move beyond Cesaria Evora's somewhat limiting 'salon' style. Even today, frequent low-key UK and American tours by stars such as Bonga, Eduardo Paim and Helder attract only hard-core expatriate audiences. But in Paris, Rotterdam, parts of the Eastern Seaboard (USA) and, of course, Lisbon, the Capo Verdean, São Toméan and Angolan music scene has become enormous, with some artists, such as this brilliant capo-hop crew, almost reaching the national pop charts.

**DOG MURRAS** – Africa's biggest success story of 2007 has been the growth and (belated) recognition of *kuduru* as one of dance music's genuine mavericks. *Kuduru – cou duro*, 'hard ass' – is the first of its kind. It's not some development of traditional music, nor is it yet

another tired African version of Jamaican reggae or Trinidadian soca. It's Afro-techno-bashment – no other phrase for it! One of the top names is Dog Murras, mainly because he's one of the few lyricists in the field.

**RICARDO LEMVO** – Los Angeles-based Congolese rumba and soukous vocalist Ricardo Lemvo, bizarrely, started his American music career a decade ago singing Mexican *rancheras*, always popular at Mexican West Coast dances. But his real passions – in equal measure – are Congolese rumba, Cuban music and old-school NYC salsa. This song is taken from his fifth album with his outstanding group Makina Loca, in which his already impressively polyglot approach to singing is crowned with a Turkish bolero as well as the usual Spanish, Lingala, Kikongo, French, Portuguese and English material. Listening to one of his albums is like hearing a set from your favourite tropical dance DJ, where variety is the keystone. This *merengue-soukous* hybrid has proven dancefloor 'rockability'.

**KAZ KASOZI** – UK-based Ugandan multi-instrumentalist and performance artist Kaz Kasozi was a seasoned pianist and cellist before taking up guitar and piano, today his favoured instruments. Since his 1998 debut album *The Quest*, he has worked on upwards of sixty studio sessions with other artists. His forthcoming album, *Naked & Blue*, is eagerly anticipated by a Ugandan and black British fan base that finds his hard-edged, rock-driven Afro-funk style irresistible and unique.

**KENGE KENGE** – As soon as you hear the opening slide-fiddle riff, you think you're in for a Johannesburg township jive tune circa 1985, but then the Luo melody locks in, with its unique 'high-to-low' structure, the first vocal phrase imitating the preceding instrumental one. Then, some crazy flautist is playing Benga-style Telecaster scales against a heavy percussion riff. What is the world coming to? This eight-piece band was formed by the late Amdo Jawaya and Samuel Nyawiro. The name, in Luo, means 'fusion of small exhilarating instruments'. Benga originated from traditional Luo music's take on bordering Congolese 1970s *kwasa kwasa*, its guitar originator being generally acknowledged as the late Daniel Owino Mesiani of Shirati Jazz. For more, check Kenge Kenge's debut album on the Introducing label, with informative notes on the band and a history of Luo and Benga.

**FATAI ROLLING DOLLAR** – If a Nigerian thinks of Afrobeat, there can only be Fela Kuti. If it's Fuji music, today's magic names are Barrister and Muri Thunder. If it's Juju on the most-wanted list, then only King Sunny Ade will satisfy. But where highlife and Palmwine are concerned, Fatai Rolling Dollar's name is the passport to social gatherings of all ages, where often-hilarious songs about family and street life, politics and wife-and-husband money 'palava' are set within hypnotic, infuriatingly catchy guitar and percussion riffs that last for thirty minutes or more. There isn't the space here to recite Fatai's full biography; suffice it to say that he was playing Lagos clubs seven nights a week when the Rolling Stones and Beatles were still in short trousers. At 81 years old, he still does so, and this compiler can personally confirm that when Fatai hugs you – his traditional greeting for everyone he meets

– even a young man will be gasping for breath for several minutes after! The album from which this track comes is a lovingly compiled selection of Fatai's greatest tunes. And, although Nigerians will sit over a Guinness or three and argue all night about whether Fatai plays highlife, *kokoma*, mambo or *agidigbo*, it always goes without saying that he's acknowledged as a national treasure.

**GRUPO LOKITO** – Unless you're one of the few who makes the slightly grim, spaghetti-junction trip through Limehouse and into Canning Town, East London (don't arrive before 1am; you'll be alone in a deserted club if you do), chances are you'll never have heard of Lokito, let alone witnessed their groundbreaking Sunday-night live Congo-Cuban-Colombian jam sessions at Club Afrique. Arranged by jazz and Latin keyboard player Sarah McGuinness, and featuring

whichever top Congolese vocalists or guitarists happen to be in town that week, this is one of just five compositions that have been committed to CDR tester so far, none of them released in any form... until now.

*A media lawyer by profession but a DJ by passion, John Armstrong has put together over 100 compilations over the years, covering all aspects of Latin, Brazilian and African music and soul, as well as early rock & roll, rockabilly and vintage R&B. (DJ bookings via [www.latinvibe.co.uk](http://www.latinvibe.co.uk))*

Richard Lemvo



Kaz Kasozi



Kenge Kenge



Fatai Rolling Dollar





- 01 **VIEUX FARKA TOURÉ** Sangare  
from the album VIEUX FARKA TOURÉ REMIXED:  
UFOS OVER BAMAKO (MP005)  
(Vieux Farka Touré/remixed and additional production by DJ  
Center for the Romanian Strut Group) pub World Village.  
Licensed from Modiba (p) & (c) 2007 Modiba Productions  
www.vieuxfarkatoure.com
- 02 **MASSUKOS** Ntolilo  
from the album BUMPING (PPLCD001)  
(Massukos) pub Poo Productions (p) Poo Productions (c)  
Poo Productions. Licensed from Poo Productions  
www.pooproductions.org
- 03 **LUISITO QUINTERO FEAT FRANCIS MBAPPE**  
Gbagada, Gbagada, Gbogodo, Gbogodo  
from the album LOUIE VEGA PRESENTS LUISITO  
QUINTERO: PERCUSSION MADDNESS (RR006DLP)  
(Fela Kuti/remix produced by Louie Vega) pub EMI Publishing  
France (p) BBE Records 2007 (c) Vega Records 2007. Licensed  
from BBE Records www.bbemusic.com
- 04 **COLOMBIAFRICA – THE MYSTIC ORCHESTRA**  
Mama Africa  
from the album VOODOO LOVE INNA CHAMPETA LAND  
(TUGCD1035)  
(Alfredo Torres, arr Edgar Gutierrez/Lucas Silva) pub Riverboat UK  
Music MCPS. Courtesy of Riverboat Records/World Music Network  
www.worldmusic.net
- 05 **LA MC MALCRIADO** Nos Probeza Ké Nos Rikeza  
from the album NOS PROBÉZA KÉ NOS RIKÉZA  
(56725462542)  
(J.Teixeira/J.P Mendes/G.Duarte/J.Teixeira Dias/Gérard "Jay"  
Noel-Pierre) pub Lusafrica/LA MC (p) Lusafrica/LA MC (c)  
Lusafrica/LA MC. Licensed from Lusafrica www.lusafrica.com
- 06 **DOG MURRAS FEAT BONGA** Kamussekele  
from the album BUÉ ANGOLANO (11808218)  
(DOG MURRAS) pub Vidisco. Licensed from Vidisco  
www.vidisco.pt
- 07 **RICARDO LEMVO** Prima Donna (Congo/USA)  
from the album ISABELA (MOPI-2)  
(Ricardo Lemvo) pub Mopiato Music. Licensed from Ricardo  
Lemvo www.makinaloca.com
- 08 **KAZ KASOZI** Nkukyaye  
from the album NAKED & BLUE (MHKCD003)  
(Kaz Isaac Kasozi) pub Madhead Kitchen. Licensed from Kaz  
Kasozi www.kazkasozi.com
- 09 **KENGE KENGE** Omeme Nyapura  
from the album INTRODUCING KENGE KENGE  
(INTRO107CD)  
(Elijah Orieno) pub Riverboat UK Music (MCPS). Courtesy of  
Introducing/World Music Network www.worldmusic.net
- 10 **FATAI ROLLING DOLLAR** Awure Banza  
from the album PAPA RISE AGAIN (EKOCD008)  
(Fatai Olayiwola Olagunju) pub Ekostar Entertainment. Licensed  
from Ekostar Entertainment
- 11 **GRUPO LOKITO** Esengo Ya Ko Bina  
from the album ¡GOZANDO CON LOKITO!  
(Music: Sara McGuinness, Lyrics: Jose Hendrix Ndelo/Elpidio Caicedo)  
Licensed from Grupo Lokito http://www.myspace.com/grupolokito

**HOW TO USE THIS ENHANCED CD** The data track on this CD contains travel and music information from the Rough Guide books as well as relevant web links. To view this via your internet browser please insert the disc into the CD drive, and double click on the file: 'LAUNCH'.

PC and Apple Mac compatible. Whilst the enhanced portion of this CD should run happily on most computers with a current web browser, we cannot accept any liability for any failure to do so or for any problems that result from running this part of the CD on your computer.

Listen to sound samples at [www.worldmusic.net](http://www.worldmusic.net) and subscribe to our free email newsletter!

Visit [www.roughguides.com/music](http://www.roughguides.com/music) to read online versions of Rough Guides' music guide books and find dozens of new CD reviews every month

**RGNET1201CD**

For more information contact

**WORLD MUSIC NETWORK**

6 Abbeville Mews  
88 Clapham Park Road  
London SW4 7BX, UK

T 020 7498 5252

F 020 7498 5353

E [post@worldmusic.net](mailto:post@worldmusic.net)



[WWW.WORLDMusic.NET](http://WWW.WORLDMusic.NET)