

## SAFARI

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar, Percussion  
Yacouba Moumouni – Fula flute  
Moussa Koné – Guitar  
Etienne Mbapé – Bass  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash, Backing vocals  
Oumar Touré – Congas, Backing vocals  
Afel Bocoum – Backing vocals

## MALAHANI

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar  
Badi Ag Agali – Guitar  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash, Backing vocals

## SAMBADIO (ACOUSTIC)

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar  
Bassekou Kouyaté – Ngoni  
Mama Sissoko – Ngoni  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash, Backing vocals  
Souleymane Kané – Calabash  
Afel Bocoum – Backing vocals

## BANDOLOBOUROU (FEATURING OUMOU SANGARÉ)

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar  
Oumou Sangaré – Vocals  
Vieux Farka Touré – Guitar  
Brehima 'Benego' Diakité – KamelNgoni  
Modibo Mintou Mariko – Bass  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash, Backing vocals  
Adou Cissé – Tambour  
Adama Koné – Shaker, Clave  
Joël Terra - Karyniang

## CHERIE (FEATURING OUMOU SANGARÉ)

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar  
Oumou Sangaré – Vocals  
Brehima 'Benego' Diakité – KamelNgoni  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash, Backing vocals

## KENOUNA

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash, Backing vocals  
Vieux Farka Touré - Shaker  
Kadiatou Ba – Backing vocals  
Afel Bocoum – Backing vocals

Fatoumata Diallo – Backing vocals  
Delfine Maokoro – Backing vocals  
Ami Wassidjé – Backing vocals

#### SADJONA (FEATURING OUMOU SANGARÉ)

Oumou Sangaré - Vocals  
Ali Farka Touré – Guitar  
Vieux Farka Touré – Guitar  
Brehima 'Benego' Diakité – Kamelngoni  
Pee Wee Ellis – Saxophones and Horn Arrangement  
Josh Arcoleo – Saxophone  
Etienne Mbapé – Bass  
Hama Sankaré – Calabash  
Lamine Soumano – Karyniang  
Joël Terra – Karyniang  
Nabintou Diakité – Backing vocals  
Fatim Kouyaté – Backing vocals

#### SAMBADIO (ELECTRIC)

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar, Horn arrangement  
Pee Wee Ellis – Saxophone, Horn arrangement  
Steve Williamson – Saxophone  
Oumar Touré – Congas, Backing vocals  
Afel Bocoum – Backing vocals  
Hama Sankaré - Backing vocals

#### KOMBO GALIA

Ali Farka Touré – Vocals, Guitar  
Ali Magassa – Guitar, Backing vocals  
Bassekou Kouyaté – Ngoni  
Mama Sissoko – Ngoni  
Dassy Sarré – Ngoni  
Souleymane Kané – Calabash, Djembe, Backing vocals  
Kadiatou Ba – Backing vocals  
Afel Bocoum - Backing vocals  
Fatoumata Diallo – Backing vocals  
Delfine Maokoro – Backing vocals  
Hama Sankaré - Backing vocals  
Marriame Tounkara – Backing vocals  
Ami Wassidjé – Backing vocals

Tracks 1, 4, 5, 7, 8 Recorded by John Hadden & Nick Robbins at Elephant Recording Studios, London, 1995.

Tracks 2, 6, Recorded by John Hadden at Berry Street Studios, London, 1991.

Tracks 3, 9 Recorded by Jerry Boys at Hotel Mande, Bamako, 2004.

Tracks 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, mixed by Emre Ramazanoglu

Track 1 mixed by Dilip Harris  
Track 8 mixed by Anthony Leung  
Track 9 mixed by Tim Jenkinson

All songs composed by Ali Farka Touré or traditional, arranged by Ali Farka Touré  
except Sadjona: traditional, arranged by Oumou Sangaré and Ali Farka Touré  
All songs published by EMI Music Publishing Ltd except:  
Malahani, Kenouna and Sadjona published by BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd

Produced by Nick Gold and Ali Farka Touré with Vieux Farka Touré

Additional recording:  
In 2020 at Studio Ali Farka Touré in Bamako, Mali  
Recording engineer: Vieux Farka Touré  
Studio Assistant: Jonathan Konaté  
In 2020 at The Crypt, Crouch End  
And in 2022 at Remote Records Studio in Bamako, Mali  
Recording Engineers: Konan Kouassi & Maurice Kabré

Mastered by Jerry Boys at Moor Room and Guy Davie at Electric Mastering  
Vinyl cut by Guy Davie at Electric Mastering

Cover photo by Anne Hunt  
Photography by Dave Peabody, Thomas Dorn, Henriette Kuypers, Hugo Glendinning  
Art direction and design by Florence de la Fourniere @ The Studio, BMG  
Song notes by Afel Bocoum with Nick Gold  
Sleeve notes edited by Mark Hudson

---

Heroes don't die.  
They engrave their presence in the very rock of life.  
They can be found everywhere, in deeds and gestures, in sounds and rhythms.

With sustained effort of research and creativity,  
Ali surfed the turbulent rhythm of life.  
Everything he touched was shaped by his ingenuity.  
Outstanding technician, farmer, river ambulance pilot, three-time Grammy award winner.  
Ali is the rhythm of life that inspires peace and friendship.  
Creator of atmosphere, with his dexterity and overflowing inspiration  
He enhanced the value of all musical instruments  
To give rhythm and flavour to all compositions.

He valued every culture in its diversity and spoke to all ages.  
From the other world he offers us this album  
A remembrance of life so vivid  
He defies time and his voice touches the essence of humanity.

- Diaroukou Sangho

-----

When I first travelled to Mali in 1991 to record Ali, he met me on the tarmac at Bamako Airport and waved the passport officials away. Following him through a crowded baggage control, he seemed to be a head taller than everyone else as the way parted before him. Shouts of 'Farka' sprang out from the right and left and he greeted them all, either with a teasing joke or an elaborately courteous embrace, all the time flashing that incredible smile.

We got in his weathered blue Peugeot 205, Ali's bandmates Afel Bocoum and Hama Sankaré in the back and me in the front passenger seat next to Ali. He said a very short prayer for the journey, tapped a cassette on the dashboard to dislodge the sand and dust and inserted it into the player. Extremely loud distorted traditional ngoni music went blaring through the open windows as we started on what was to be a most memorable two day journey north to his home village Niafunké. It was obvious from the way he negotiated what were to me invisible roads within an endless red-sand scrub landscape, that Ali had made this trip many, many times. We stopped at tiny villages where everyone knew Ali and we were offered milk. At a river crossing, we tied ropes to the car to help drag it through the water which seemed hazardously deep to me. We stopped at the walled town of Djenne with its famous mosque and Ali was asked to play a concert that very evening. He couldn't refuse. Boys ran round the streets announcing the show, selling hastily made tickets as a tannoy broadcast the upcoming event. The concert was full and it was great. During the performance there was an 'animateur' on stage next to Ali who would, at certain musical phrases or guitar hero poses from Ali, direct the audience when to applaud. Which they did. I erected a mic stand in the audience and tried to record the show on my portable DAT recorder. I was applauded for my effort. We slept on the roof that night and I woke to the feel of a scorching sun on my face.

Continuing our journey alongside the river, Ali called for his gun and proceeded to take shots through the open window while steering with one hand on the wheel. He killed a bird and a rabbit which we ate the next day. In the evening as the sun went down, we stopped next to the river and Ali showed me where Niafunké sat, a faint blur in the far distance. With the windows continually open we were covered in red dust. We were all the same colour, Hama remarked. We got out of the car and Ali set up his little Calor gas stove and heated up some Nescafe. We stripped off and waded into the river. It was the most wonderful cooling, cleansing feeling followed by the best coffee of my life.

Ali travelled widely in Mali throughout his life, absorbing music wherever he went. His first and most crucial inspiration was the Sonrhaï spirit music of his ancestral region of northern Mali. But there were to be many more. He was captivated by the many rich traditions he encountered, absorbing and adapting them into his own rich and idiosyncratic body of work.

In his youth, Ali travelled as a musician, moving from village to village by donkey, on foot or pirogue, either alone or with small ensembles. Later, as a river ambulance pilot and as a chauffeur, his travels took him further afield throughout Mali and into neighbouring Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mauritania. As part of the successful local music and dance troupe, he represented Niafunké and then the regional centre Mopti at arts festivals in the capital Bamako. In Bamako he worked at Radio Mali as a sound engineer, travelling the country, recording all sorts of traditional regional music. He would spend the day recording local musicians, and in the evening he would pick up his guitar and

regale the locals with his interpretation of their tradition. He also travelled widely as a guide and driver for the celebrated writer, researcher and poet Amadou Hampâté Bâ.

Ali was unique amongst Malian musicians in his facility to play such a wide range of distinct and unique regional styles. The great kora player Toumani Diabaté was astonished by Ali's familiarity with Mande music when the pair first played together, developing a chemistry they explored over two award-winning albums.

From 1986 Ali also travelled throughout Europe, North America, Brazil and Japan. Yet at the height of his international success, he became increasingly reluctant to travel abroad, famously saying that he wasn't a tourist, that he 'was here to work.' His music and art had to stay physically connected to the earth that bore them to retain their power. "Fresh shit sticks and smells," he maintained, "but dry shit just crumbles." From then on we recorded him only in Mali.

In the studio, Ali liked to work fast. He'd be patient and professional with the technicians while we got a sound, but then he wanted to get on with it, record and leave. He wouldn't brief his musicians on what he was going to play, challenging them to work out which song was coming while he played a brief guitar introduction. Sometimes he'd up the ante by improvising a new opening and expecting them to fall immediately and definitely into groove on the right beat.

The songs collected here were not recorded with any particular release or project in mind, but more as a memo of an idea or an artistic meeting. Over time they became a precious private archive shared amongst a small group of family, musicians and friends. I worked with his son Vieux to complete the recordings ready for release. The pieces encompass a wide variety of styles and are sung in five languages. We recorded them at various times and places over a period of 15 years, either as the whim took Ali or when he'd play something 'new' and I'd get excited and ask that we record it. But I don't think that anything much was really new to Ali; he'd recall a piece and if he fancied playing it, he'd do it. I got the impression he was teasing me with snippets of this vast repertoire. He always had another song or rhythm or riff which he would reveal as part of a pool of related songs: an inexhaustible repertoire. And he knew the stories and legends and origins behind each piece: an encyclopaedic knowledge.

Ali could be very hospitable with his music which he considered indestructible. When there were guest musicians, he would slow down his playing or repeat a riff while they worked out what to do. But even then he wanted to get on with it.

No Second Takes.

- Nick Gold

---

#### ALI IS A BAOBAB

Because the Baobab is a tree that has longevity, and the tenacity and patience to grow. It has multiple uses.

Every part of a Baobab has a function in society.

Even when it dies, a Baobab provides natural fertiliser for many kilometres of land.

He is no longer with us, but his cultural heritage, his character and international renown allow his clan and others to thrive. He enriched Mali's cultural capital.

#### ALI IS A UNIFIER

He never sang into a void. Every word in Ali's songs carries weight.

Malians have interpreted his music in three ways.

Through the transformative messages of his songs, which rouse the people to nation-building, pointing us towards the development of our country and others.

Through the originality of his melodies, which remind us of great events.

As a cultural source. Ali was inspired by the cultural values of all the ethnic groups of Mali.

His is a hybrid music.

#### ALI IS A MYSTERY

Because, on his debut on the national stage no one saw him coming.

Yet wherever he went, he made an impact that touched people's souls.

Everywhere he went he left an unforgettable memory. But they are all different.

That is to say that nobody really knows Ali.

- Afel Bocoum

-----

SAFARI ('Medicine', Sonrhaï) Here 'medicine' refers to guidance to bring someone back to their senses. Ali sings that he has the medicine to cure 'baliky lalo' - old men whose behavior is contrary to our customs and morals.

Recorded with an expanded group including bass, second guitar and the traditional Fula flute playing of Yacouba Moumouni from Niger.

MALAHANI ('Excuse me', Zarma and Sonrhaï) The singer apologises because the song is risqué, about sensual love. It describes where a provocative dance can lead. "We dance. You put your hand on her heart. The bed dances."

The classic combination of Ali with Hama Sankaré on calabash percussion and vocals is augmented here by the young Tuareg rhythm guitarist Badi Ag Agali.

SAMBADIO ('Second Son', Fulfuldé) is sung in praise of the brave farmers who cultivate the land against all odds. Sambadio was a legendary farmer (and the second son of his family) who "has no fear of the earth. He has only his own strength to count on. He sows the earth to feed his family. He ploughs the fields without rest. He has no fear."

A personal favourite of Ali's, this song is presented in two versions. This one has an acoustic, campfire feel with Ali accompanied by ngonis (traditional Malian lute) played by the maestros Bassekou Kouyaté and Mama Sissoko.

BANDOLOBOUROU (Fulfuldé) A traditional Fula song celebrating the legendary courage of Oumarou Amiri Amadou Dicko, chief of Diona, who after an epic three-day struggle, defeated and killed a lion that had been devastating the area's livestock.

Ali first recorded this song on his 1976 debut album in an acoustic duet with the late, great ngoni player Nassourou Sarré. Here he's on electric guitar with Oumou Sangaré singing accompanied by her inimitable kamelngoni player Brehima 'Benego' Diakité. Ali's son Vieux arranged the addition of bass and further percussion.

CHERIE ('Darling', Sonrhai) Ali encourages lovers not to listen to those who meddle in their lives. Trust your love. "I love you, our fathers know, our mothers know, our families know, that I love you."

One of Ali's most popular songs, here sung as a duet with Oumou Sangaré for whom it is a favourite.

KENOUNA (Fulfuldé, Bamanan and Bozo) A light-hearted song about adolescent love, it tells the story of girls bathing naked in the river hoping they haven't been spied on by the local boys, which would damage their reputations. Ali originally wrote this song for the Bozo singer Niaga Tanapo to sing as a homage to her mother.

Ali learned the motif from the Bozo fishermen who work his beloved Niger River. The call and response vocal is sung over a typical Bozo rhythm that takes its pulse from the paddling oars of a pirogue.

SADJONA ('The weight of fate', Bamanan). This song recounts the life of the Donso hunters, the spiritual brotherhood who protect society in the forests of Wassoulou in southern Mali. The world is intended for all, and it is important to preserve the balance between man, animals, fauna and flora. The Donso hold mystical secrets but they, like the animals they hunt, will also die. Men are no better prepared than animals to face life and death. The fate of all is bound by chance. Oumou Sangaré, the 'Nightingale of Wassoulou', pays tribute to legendary figures of the past and to a present-day hero, Ali Farka Touré, who was himself recognised as a mystic.

Each death has its own rites.  
To die young is a destiny.  
At the death of Ali  
I'm talking about Ali Farka Touré,  
Please, we must welcome him with the sound of the guitar,  
The genuine sound of the guitar, please.  
Welcome him with the hymn of the stars, please.  
Every star has its own rites.  
In truth, we are stepping into the unknown.

What if Ali Farka were to die?  
Explosions will mark his funeral.  
Accompany his body with the sound of his guitar.  
Welcome him with the hymn of the stars, please.

Oumou launched into this piece during a microphone check. Fortunately for us, the tapes were rolling. The rhythm is 100% Wassoulou.

SAMBADIO ('Second Son', Fulfuldé) An electric guitar version (see above) featuring Pee Wee Ellis and Steve Williamson on saxophones in an arrangement by Pee Wee and Ali.

KOMBO GALIA ('Uncle Galia', Bozo). A tribute to the elite of Bozo fishermen who have mastered the ways of the powerful water spirits. Men such as Sidi, Kunandi Baba, Ali Kayon Baba, Hamadoun Timbo. The fishing areas named in the song - Soko Sondu, Gassi Gabbi, Dugu Djinde & Colondel

Djinde - are ancestral names from Ali's home village Niafunké. The title refers to a French transport boat of the colonial era after which a Bozo fisherman proudly named his canoe.

This song with its wonderful soaring chorus and biting electric guitar was recorded by Ali's 'ngoni band' at the Hotel Mandé on the banks of the River Niger.