

Amadou & Mariam – Dimanche a Bamako (2004)

Written by bluesever

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1. *M'Bife* 2. *M'Bife Balafon* 3. *Coulibaly* 4. *La Realite* 5. *Senegal Fast Food* 6. *Artistiya* 7. *La Fete au Village* 8. *Camions Sauvages* 9. *Beaux Dimanches* 10. *La Paix* 11. *Djanfa* 12. *Taxi Bamako* 13. *Politic Amagni* 14. *Gnidjougouya* 15. *M'Bife Blues*

Amadou Bagayoko — guitar, vocals Mariam Doumbia — vocals, choir Nicolas Auriauit — trumpet Samou Bagayoko — choir Manu Chao — guitar, vocals, choir Ousmane Cissé — choir Boubacar Dembele — djembe Roberto Shilling Pollo Duarte — piano Tiken Jah Fakoly — vocals Laurent Griffon — bass Stéphane Hamokrane — choir Alain Hatot — clarinet, flute, baritone saxophone Pierre Hauthe — trombone Renaud Lacoche — saw Loïc Landois — harmonica Cédric Lesouquet — double bass Ibrahim Maalouf — trumpet François Regis Matuszenski — keyboards Roy Paci — trumpet Stephane San Juan — drums, tabla Philippe Teboul — percussion Tiemoko Traoré — choir

Amadou & Mariam, the blind couple from Mali, have certainly paid their dues over the last 30 years, and it's about time they received their big break. Certainly given the excellent reviews in Europe, *Dimanche a Bamako* could be it, thanks to the production and participation by the elf prince of world music, Manu Chao. He brings a playful lightness to their soulful, bluesy Malian sound, letting in plenty of sunshine, and drawing in a sense of place through the ambience of traffic sounds and snippets of conversation. Chao is also obviously present on several tracks, such as "Senegal Fast Food," which offers a bouncy, reggae-styled rhythm so typical of Chao's own records. But even when not so obviously asserting himself, his presence is felt in the space he creates, and the use he makes of Mariam's admittedly limited voice (she's good, but no one will ever mistake her for one of the world's greatest singers), as on "Beau Dimanche," for example. Lyrically, this is very much an album of love songs, postcards between the couple, but it never veers into maudlin sentiment. Yet there's also a political edge to it, such as with "La Realite." Even if you don't understand the words, however, the entire disc is an absolute aural joy, poppy enough to be exquisitely memorable, yet with layers of resonance underneath. Likely to be one of the world music albums of 2005, it can hopefully find the kind of wide audience it surely deserves. --- Chris Nickson, Rovi

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