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Celluloid Records

brings you
the
"global pop"
of
TOURE KUNDA

In support of TOURE KUNDA's most exciting record to date,
the Bill Laswell produced lp; Natalia, the Senegalese group
will be touring the United States this summer.

in Chicago
@

THE PARK WEST
322 West Armitage

@
8pm

on
Sunday, June the 23rd

tickets are \$8.50 in advance and \$10.00 at the door

For any and all information regarding TOURE KUNDA, this date,
interviews, press photos, and promotional records ring me

Margot Core for Celluloid Records @ [212] 598-4781

locally contact Donny Johnson @ [312] 929-1322

All other call Celluloid Records @ [212] 714-0033

CORE ARTS

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CELL 6113, TOURE KUNDA, NATALIA

What makes an independent label, like **Celluloid Records** for example, release 3 - make that 4 - records in as many weeks by one act? The act is **TOURE KUNDA** - virtually untried in the US/ an acknowledged major success in Europe. What makes this phenomenon is in the grooves.

On the heels of their releasing the three pre-existing **TOURE KUNDA** lps for the first time for the American market [CELL 6102, Casamance au Claire de Lune; CELL 6104, Amadou Tilo; and CELL 6106, Live Paris-Ziguinchor] **CELLULOID RECORDS** is releasing:

Natalia

TOURE KUNDA's most sophisticated African pop statement to date. Produced by **Material's Bill Laswell** (of Herbie Hancock and Mick Jagger notoriety) Natalia also features the work of **Nicky Skopelitis** on guitar, **CELLULOID** recording artist and master kora player **Foday Musa Suso**, percussionist **Aiyb Dieng**, and the keyboard wizardry of **Bernie Worrell**.

An enormous popular audience has already responded to **TOURE KUNDA** and their global pop, some of the enclosed press clips from their recent US dates reflect this....by now you are probably part way into side one and finding it hard to stay sitting down.....I'll let **Ismailia, Sixu, and Ousmane Toure** tell you the answer to the question.

Need to know more?

ring me at the above number,

Margot Core, for **CELLULOID RECORDS**

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155 West 29th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001 • (212) 714-0033, Telex 669253 CELL

TOURE KUNDA-BIOGRAPHY

Ismail, Sixu Tidiane and Ousmane are the three Toure brothers from Senegal, West Africa, known as TOURE KUNDA. Toure Kunda translates from the Soninke dialect as "the Toure family", or "the family of elephants". Each of the brothers sing and play various African percussion instruments, and lead an exciting performing band with other singers, dancers and musicians.

Originally from the Casamance region of Senegal, Toure Kunda have been based in Paris, France since 1978. Their music has its roots in traditional Senegalese music, in particular the "Djamba Dong" or "Dance of the Leaves", an initiation dance that is performed at the passage from childhood to adult life. Toure Kunda's music however, is heavily influenced by Western musics such as rock and reggae. This combination of a rich musical tradition with contemporary influences has made Toure Kunda Europe's best selling African band.

Toure Kunda are a large family, and each brother was born of the same father but of different mothers. In fact, Ismail and Sixu Tidiane were born on the same day, but since Ismail was born earlier, he is the family leader. The Casamance region of Senegal (located below Gambia, which divides the country in two) is a very rich region, in both agriculture and the arts. Thus, it was a major step for Ismail to travel to Paris in 1975 to begin the development of Toure Kunda.

After spending a year in Paris adapting himself to European culture,

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TOURE KUNDA (page 2)

Ismail, sent for Sixu, and the the eldest brother, Amadou. Before Amadou's arrival, Ismail and Sixu recorded two albums mixing reggae and African music, but they were poorly distributed, and were not made under the name of Toure Kunda.

When Amadou arrived in Paris, the brothers began using the Toure Kunda name, and recorded an album called Toure Kunda, for Celluloid-France. In January of 1983, Amadou died during a performance at Chapel des Lombards in Paris. The official cause of death was listed as a heart attack, although there is some question about this. Apparently Amadou had been over exerting himself, and the club was particularly smoky that night. He went outside to get some air and asked some security people to get an ambulance for him, but they didn't believe at first that he was so ill. By the time an ambulance did get him to a hospital he had died, but not before urging his brothers to continue on.

After Amadou's death, the younger brother Ousmane was called on to join the group, and he brought with him a new strength and spirit to the band, which gave them the will to continue after Amadou's death.

In the Spring of 1983, Toure Kunda recorded their tribute album to Amadou: Amadou Tilo (CELL 6104). This LP proved to be very popular, and the band embarked on extensive tours of Europe and Algeria, leading up to their most important tour yet: their return to West Africa.

The Paris-Ziguinchor tour of West Africa, the results of which can be heard on Toure Kunda-Live (CELL 6106), was a monumental undertaking. Technically, they overcame the problems of the lack of infrastructure and power supplies by using a flatbed truck that opens to become a

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TOURE KUNDA (page 3)

stage, making them a self-contained unit. There were also difficult administrative problems that had to be overcome, but in the end the tour was an enormous success. They performed eleven concerts in four countries (Ivory Coast, Mali, Gambia, and Senegal), including a concert at Demba Diop which drew over 20,000 people. They were also received by the President of Senegal. A film crew was on the tour, and they produced an hour-long film for French TV.

After their return from Africa, Toure Kunda recorded Casamance Au Clair de Lune (CELL 6102), their most traditional LP. By now, they are major stars in France, where they have been awarded gold records, and where they drew 23,000 Parisians to a recent concert.

In January 1985, Toure Kunda went into the studio with producer Bill Laswell of Material to record Natalia (CELL 6113). In April of this year Toure Kunda embarks on their first American tour.

The Pop Life | Jon Pareles

Familial Beat Enlivens Toure Kunda

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 1985

EUROPE'S most popular African band is a family that plays together: three Senegalese brothers — singers, guitarists and percussionists — now based in Paris. Toure Kunda (which can be translated as "the family of elephants"), sells out stadiums in France and in Senegal; the Toure brothers appear with such fellow African superstars as King Sunny Adé on the benefit single "Tam-Tam Pour L'Ethiopie." The band makes its New York debut tonight and tomorrow at Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick Street, at Houston Street.

Toure Kunda has an international lineup. Along with Ismaïla, Ousmane and Sixu Tidiane Toure from the Casamance region in southern Senegal, Toure Kunda includes musicians from Cameroon, Martinique and France, and a dancer from the Ivory Coast. Its music is informed by reggae and American soul, but its central element, Ismaïla Toure said, is Senegalese — rhythms from a coming-of-age ceremony called Djamba Dong, or "Dance of the Leaves."

"Djamba Dong is a training for young boys and young girls from 8 to 16," Mr. Toure said. "During this initiation there is a lot of music — when they want the initiates to make some promenades, or go to eat, or have a fiesta. That music is where we take our inspiration. There is percussion, and a chorus, and balafo," an African xylophone. "In Senegal we also use kora" — a harp-guitar — "and molo, a small African guitar. When we play with our musicians, we ask them to make the same sounds with electric guitars and synthesizers."

"When you hear the different rhythms through the Djamba Dong," Mr. Toure said, "you can find many kinds of music. That's why people hear inside our music some reggae, some calypso, some salsa or some highlife and Afro-beat."

Ismaïla, Ousmane and Sixu Tidiane Toure are actually stepbrothers; their father has five wives. They grew up singing together with a fourth stepbrother, Amadou, who was part of Toure Kunda in its first years but died in 1983 of a heart attack. One of the band's trademarks is the brothers' close harmony singing.

"If you are not brothers it takes at least 10 years to learn to sing together," Ismaïla Toure said. "Sometimes it is very hard to work together with the family. But in Africa they teach us to live together and to fight together, too."

Toure Kunda has made seven albums since the band started in

France in 1978, singing in such African languages as Wolof and Mandingo. "Senegal was a French colony," Mr. Toure said. "We decided to go back and colonize them with Senegalese culture."

The band's American tour coincides with the United States release, on Celluloid Records, of Toure Kunda's four most recent albums. "Casamance au Clair de Lune," recorded by the Toure brothers and two French musicians, pays homage to Senegalese traditions. Most of the songs are backed with various percussion instruments; there are segments of traditional-style drumming and songs in which voices and multiple balafo patterns are interwoven.

"Amadou Tilo," a tribute to Amadou Toure, looks outward; it samples reggae, Ghanaian highlife, Congolese rumba, soukous from Cameroon and American-style funk. Its most compelling song, "Salya," features a lead vocal by Amadou Toure.

The band's two latest albums are even better; they show Toure Kunda approaching a synthesis. "Live," recorded during a tour of Senegal, includes one song modeled on the griot songs of the Gambia, in central Senegal, which have long vocal lines and the fast, twinkling countermelodies of the kora, and another that recalls the traditional balafo music. And the tunes on the crisply produced "Natalia" take off from reggae and American funk, complete with soul-style horns, and end up with a groove that is buoyantly pan-African — or, perhaps, global.

The
New York
Times

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APRIL 10-16, 1985

THE CITY
SUN

Some Senegalese Soul . . .



by Don Palma

The Toure Brothers—Ismaila, Sixu, and Ousmane—who form the Senegalese vocal and percussion trio Toure Kunda will make their first New York appearance this week at S.O.B.'s. Though the Toure Brothers are a trio, they are accompanied by a seven-piece band which includes synthesizer, guitar, bass, drums, and two saxophones. And like a reggae vocal trio, they back their compelling vocals and sweet harmonies with a crack band that blends African rhythms into R&B arrangements.

Ismaila, a tall slender man in wire-rimmed glasses and former Peace Corps worker, looks every bit the scholar as he explains the origins of Toure Kunda. He and his brother, Sixu, who seems more the prankster, first started performing music in 1965 at the behest of their older brother, Amadou, a professional

musician. Amadou was leaving the town of Ziguinchor in the Casamance region of Senegal and needed singers for a tour in Mauritania. That instilled in Ismaila and Sixu the desire to become entertainers.

"The first records we had to listen to came from the States and Zaire," Ismaila explained. "As kids we heard like James Brown and Otis Redding because there was no real recording and distribution structure for African music. We either heard music locally or foreign tapes."

Some of the local music that inspired Ismaila and which has become the heart of Toure Kunda's music is from the "Dance of the Leaves," an annual initiation ceremony for children between 12 and 15 years old.

"For the month before the ceremony, the town is alive with preparation and music. When the ceremony begins in September, the children go into the sa-

cred forest where they go through the rites of initiation for their passage into adulthood. The big task of this festival is to dance while suffering. Our music is either totally inspired by this ceremony or our songs are talking totally about it. See, nobody writes this material. If you're doing it, you're writing it. You're participating in the sentiment."

Ismaila continues, saying, "What is fantastic in the Casamance is that the people have taken the most positive elements of Christianity and Islam while retaining the animist religion of Africa."

Toure Kunda's music is similar in this vein, as they too strive to incorporate the best elements of Western pop with traditional Senegalese musics. Although the group has lived in Paris for the last four years, they still want to preserve the Senegalese "soul."

Ismaila proclaims: "We never wanted to play American music, but we wanted to use the technology to bring out our sound."

Adds Sixu: "We use Western instruments, but we're trying to have a new way of seeing them. Like we try to have the piano play the *kora* part. The instrument doesn't matter, it's the approach we use."

For Toure Kunda, the approach is informed by the percussion and vocal styles of all of Senegal's ethnic groups. You might say that they are contemporary Senegalese troubadours whose musical universe is open enough to bring a bit of Memphis soul, some reggae, and even a jazzy lick or two to their folksy sound.

Toure Kunda will perform at SOB's, 204 Varick St., on Wednesday and Thursday, March 10 and 11. Call, (212) 243-4940.



Toure-de-Force Toure Kunda

Finding an American Audience for Afropop

By J.D. Considine

AMONG TRUE BELIEVERS in African pop, there has never been any doubt that the sounds of Africa would find an audience in America. But what African act would be the first to capture America's ear?

Manu Dibango was an earlier front runner, thanks to "Top 40" hit "Soul Makossa," but soon sank from sight. The Afrobeat approach of Fela Anikulapo Kuti was strong enough to spark Talking Heads' shift to dance music, but Fela's intensely African perspective and squabbles with the Nigerian government put him out of the running. And though King Sunny Ade was the beneficiary of a massive music press blitz two years ago, his American record deal dried up after three albums.

It's time to introduce a more viable candidate to the race for America's ears. Say hello to Toure Kunda.

Granted, this Senegalese brother act has a few drawbacks. First, they prefer to sing in such native languages as Manadingue Soninke, Poular and Ouolof; second, even if they were to use a Western language, it would be French, not English. Finally, they're plainly devoted to the traditional side of Senegalese music, and that finds them using instruments that, to Western ears, are fairly exotic.

But Toure Kunda's musical strength far overshadows these few cultural differences. For one thing, their music is insistently melodic. True, there's a strong polyrhythmic underpinning to their songs, with all sorts of percussive interplay percolating beneath the vocals, but that seems more to energize the melody than to detract from it. Even on the

drum-dominated album "Casamance au Clair de Lune," the simplicity of the settings lends an evenness to the material so that "Sol Mal," with its vigorous, carnival rhythms, balances perfectly with the raw melodic charm of "Ne Nam" and the insistent thump of "Saf Sap."

"Amadou-Tilo" is much closer to the mark for American audiences, though, because this album fattens out Toure Kunda's Africanisms with slick, yet wholly appropriate, pop arrangements. As a result, the album fairly overflows with energy and pop appeal, whether delivered with the gentleness of "Laborador" and the title song, or with the intensity of the fiercely danceable "Courrier" and "Salya." At its best, as on "Utamada," this album demonstrates the kind of match between brain and brawn that makes African pop so dynamic and invigorating.

Least there be any doubt as to how well Toure Kunda put this across in performance, there's "Paris-Ziguinchor," a live album remarkable for its vitality. It isn't simply that such favorites as "Utamanda" sound hot enough to make you wonder if the album wasn't recorded on asbestos. The confident ease with which the group shifts to the light, Mandingo-styled "Sidi Yella" makes this a delightful reflection of both a sound and an aesthetic.

Toure Kunda may not be destined to become the Next Big Thing. But they certainly deserve consideration, and not just from Afropop fans.

TOURE KUNDA — "Casamance au Clair de Lune" (Celluloid CELL6102); "Amadou-Tilo" (Celluloid CELL6104); and "Paris-Ziguinchor" (Celluloid CELL6106); appearing Friday and Saturday at Kikimajoro's Heritage Hall.

Africa for USA

by David H. Adams

Someone moved First Avenue Monday night. Not even the Royal Purple Spell could keep the club anchored to the corner of 1st Avenue & 7th Street. The musical/emotional/spiritual power of Toure Kunda (love that thundering name) swept the club away from its cool Midwest confines and transported it to somewhere in the Casamance region of Senegal, West Africa.

The 10-piece, racially mixed Toure Kunda (from the Soninke dialect meaning "the Toure family," or "the family of elephants") played with a vision and esprit de corps that surpassed even their latest live album, *Paris-Ziguinchor* (on Celluloid). The band fuses traditional percussion-oriented Casamance folk music (particularly the Djamba Dong or "dance of the leaves," an initiation ritual performed when passing from childhood to adult life) with reggae, funk, and salsa to create a swirling rain forest of richly melodic sound led by the sweet harmonies of the three drumming Toure brothers and

singer/dancer Nabou Diop.

The group, formed in Paris in 1978, started the show with "Amadou Tilo" ("the sun of Amadou"), a tribute to the fourth Toure brother, Amadou, who died of a heart attack during a performance in January 1983 at Chapel de Lombards in Paris. The song opened with African xylophone and congas before the group segued into the bleating saxophone driven "Casa Di Man-sa." Up next was "Fode," a rollicking reggae-cum-Latin number whose melodies careened back and forth while two of the three Toure brothers danced like elves. The band also played "Niditaye," a melodic reggae cut from their new Bill Laswell-produced album, *Natalia* (Laswell just finished producing Jagger's *She's The Boss*). The final number of the first set was from their more traditional LP, *Casamance Au Clair de Lune*. It began with an eerie bamboo flute, then a capella four-part vocal harmonies before breaking into a serious dub-wise skank. The packed First Avenue crowd flipped.

Yet considering Toure Kunda's music is a reflection of the day-to-day reality of their socio-cultu-

KUNDA from 10

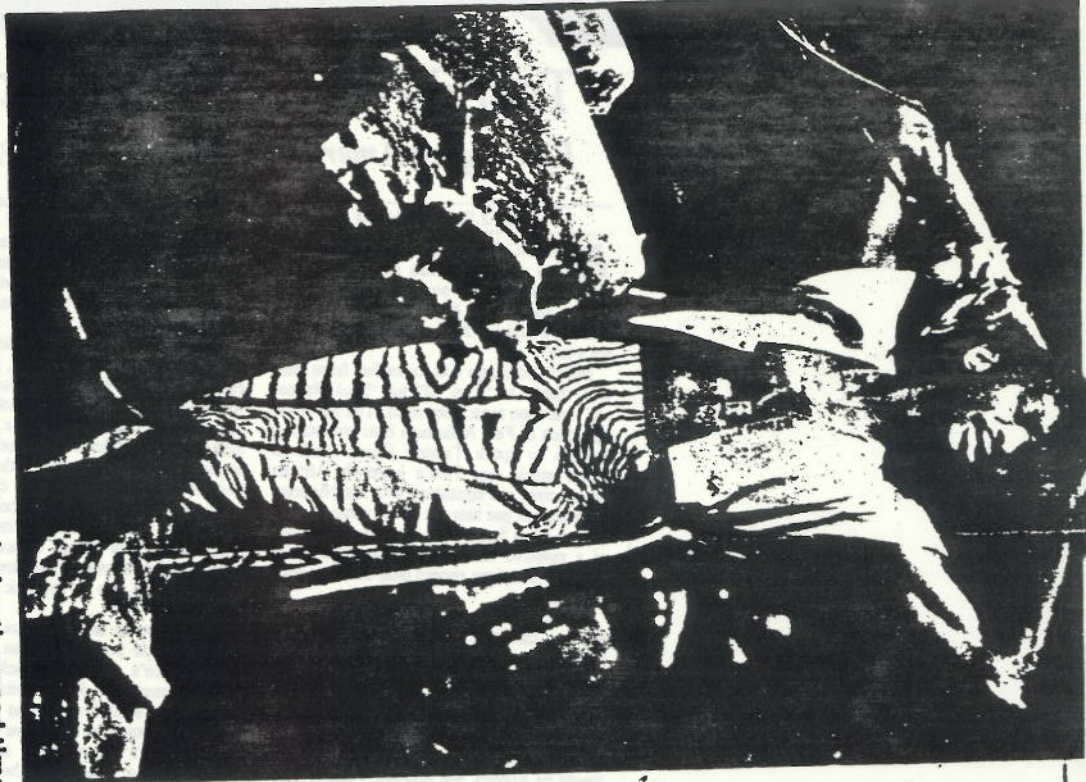
chant echoed in the background, I stepped out into the night air, and I could've sworn I saw an elephant doing a cha-cha down Hennepin Avenue.

Azymuth keyboardist, producer, and leader Jose Roberto Betrami (Bert) calls this Brazilian pop-jazz trio's music *samba doido* (literally "crazy samba"); a self-coined buzz word to describe the lightly rippling, tropical noodling that's been featured on the group's nine LPs (six by the group, one solo by each member) since 1979. Now being as how "fusion" is a term that'll have most legit jazz critics reaching for their guns, I'd have to come down in the camp that says Latin rhythmic invention is 'bout the only thing savin' the genre from bein' declared wallpaper for my mother's den. I mean the '70s did see its share of jazz-rock hacks.

For me, Azymuth's latest LP, *Flame* (late summer '84) is their most interesting because of the airy soprano of fellow Brazilian Flora Purim. She makes tracks like "The Textile Factory" seem organically carved from nature. Overall, *Flame* seems to display a rootsier sense of Bert & Co.—closer to early Return To Forever than \$pyro (sic) Gyra.

The group did six extended "pieces" during their 50-minute opening set for Toure Kunda—striking a mild groove between the most Europeanized bossa nova and the more African *samba da roda*, but they failed to generate any genuine excitement until the last track, the foot tappin' "Make Mine Guarana" from *Rapid Transit*.

Most of the set was a ho-hum affair bordering on the banal. Bassist Alex Malheiros spent a majority of the night tryin' to wow us with stale glissando while searchin' for the Spirit of the Funk. Bert meanwhile laid down his best Bob Jamesisms on "Partido Alto" from their debut, *Light As A Feather*, and "The Prisoner" from *Flame*. His Stevie Wonder-like vocorder came in handy on "Dear Limmertz" from '80's *Outubro*, and "May I Have This Dance" from '82's *Telecommunication*. Drummer Ivan Conti is the best musician of the three. His trap drum work and cymbal shading kept me from falling in my Manhattan, but the gig woulda went down smoother had I been on the beach in Rio. ●



The Toure brothers have an elephantine good time

Photo/Greta Pratt

ral life, what happens when you wrench it from the bosom of the Mother continent and try to sell it in the world's biggest marketplace, America? No, the music doesn't necessarily lose its ability to move you, but it does lose its indigenous, substantive meaning. In addition, Toure Kunda is gonna have to be able to break down the language/culture/race barrier that has driven even "King" Sunny Ade back to his native Nigeria. Afro-American artists playing so-called "non-mainstream" music like jazz, are still having problems getting airplay on "white" radio stations (not to mention the rightward-shifting "black" stations). So how is Toure Kunda gonna get on the air?

Those thoughts flashed through my mind as the group kicked off the second set with the hit-bound groove of "Toure Kunda." With its giggling guitar, disco-funk bass, and busy percussion, the song comes off like an Africanized version of Michael Jackson's "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough." The feeling of the song was similar, and neither the dedicated fans nor performers wanted to stop until someone turned on the lights at one a.m. As the audience participation