

## Music from Burkina Faso

Posted At : January 7, 2008 11:36 PM | Posted By : Matthew LaVoie

Related Categories: Burkina Faso

Today I'm going to take you back to the 1960s (and early 1970s) with some great music from Burkina Faso.

Let's start with L'Harmonie Voltaïque, the group that was founded by Antoine Ouedraogo in 1948. They were the first group created to play 'modern music' in what was then the French West African colony of Upper-Volta. In early 1948 Antoine Ouedraogo was working for the French colonial administration in Mali (which at the time was called the French Sudan). That spring he returned to Upper-Volta and, tired of having to bring groups from the Cote D'Ivoire whenever he wanted to organize a 'soiree-dansante', Antoine decided to create the colony's first modern orchestra. The group was officially born, with the approval of the Colonial Governor of Upper-Volta, on April 8, 1948. Their early repertoire consisted of French Songs (especially the ballads of French crooner Tino Rossi), and latin rhythms (for e.g. the cha-cha, and bolero). The repertoire started to change in 1964 when the multi-instrumentalist Maurice Sempore (tenor sax, flute) became the bandleader. It was under his leadership that the group started to perform songs in 'Moore' (the language of the Mossi people).

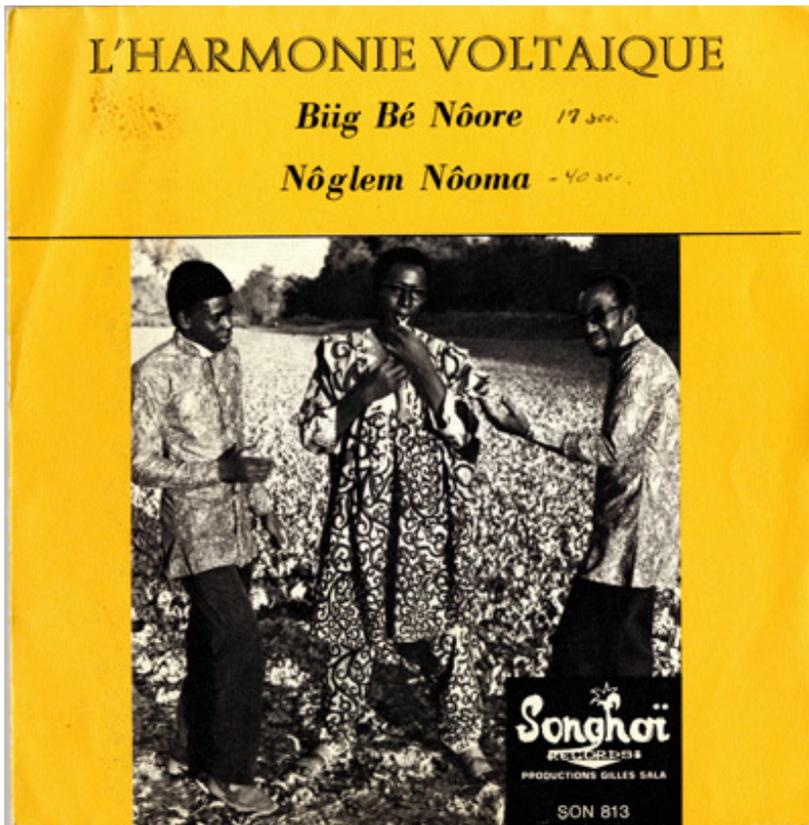


Although recorded in 1970, these next two tracks give some idea of their earlier repertoire. The first track 'Killa Naa Naa Ye Killa' is an instrumental, composed by Maurice Sempore. The group categorizes this song as 'Jazz'. The title refers to an onomatopoeic phrase in Moore that is taught to children to help them with their pronunciation- the equivalent of 'sally sells seashells by the seashore'. The B-side of the 45 is a Bolero-Cha-Cha that was also composed by Maurice Sempore. It is the story of Therese Baba, a young woman whose parents were very strict. They did all they could to prevent Therese from going out at night to dance, but even though she never left the house, they could not prevent her from getting pregnant.

↪ [L'Harmonie Voltaïque "Killa Naa Naa Ye Killa"](#)

↪ [L'Harmonie Voltaïque "A Therese Baba"](#)

In the late 1960s Maurice Sempore started to change L'Harmonie Voltaïque's repertoire. He started to write modern arrangements of traditional rhythms. The A-side of this next 45 is a good example.

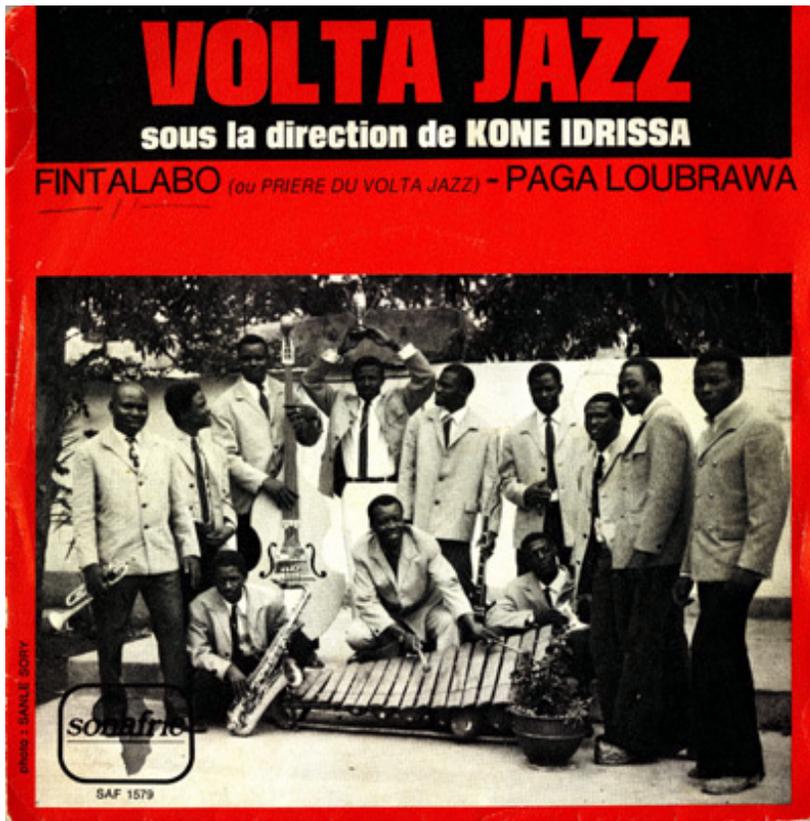


In 'Biig be Noore', which is built on the *Wissé* rhythm of the Mossi (from Koudougou in the center of the country), Maurice Sempore sings the story of a boy who travels with his father and embarrasses him by talking too much. The B-side, composed by Henri Tapsoba, is a lament for a friend who has passed away.

↔ [L'Harmonie Voltaïque "Biig be Noore"](#)

↔ [L'Harmonie Voltaïque "Noglem Nooma"](#)

Next up is the Volta Jazz a group that came together in 1964 in Bobo-Dioulasso, in the Western part of the country. The group was led by the guitar player Kone Idrissa and in 1967 they won the 'Premier Grand Prix du Premier Cercle d'Activites Literaires et Artistique de Haute-Volta'- which was the country's most prestigious cultural award. We have got a couple of their 45s in the archives.



The song 'Fintalabo' was composed by Kone Idrissa, and is sung in the Djula language. The refrain goes 'Power is not enough for you, Kings of Kings, you are never satisfied'.

↳ [Volta Jazz "Fintalabo \(ou Priere du Volta Jazz\)"](#)

One of my favorite Volta Jazz tracks is 'Mama Soukous'. I assume that the title refers to the Congolese Soukous rhythm/dance that was popular in the late 1960s. The music, however, doesn't sound much like Congolese Soukous. The track starts with a verse by singer Sanon Seydou and then is pretty much a rave-up featuring the raucous guitar playing of Dieudonne Koudougou.

↳ [Volta Jazz "Mama Soukous"](#)

This last track from Burkina features another group from Bobo-Dioulasso. This is Coulibaly Tidiane l'International Dieliba and the Orchestre Dafra Star, a group that was formed in 1975 and included several former members of the Volta Jazz (Dieudonne Koudougou, and singer Siaka Ouattara Elvis).

---



This track "Bombossi" is built around the balafon (wood-key xylophone) playing of Drissa Diabate Tchai and Mama Kone.

↳ [Coulibaly Tidiane & L'Orchestre Dafra Star "Bombossi"](#)

Hope you enjoyed the music... if so, stay tuned, I'll be pulling out more forgotten 45s in the weeks to come.