

# Majid Bekkas - African Gnaoua Blues

Majid Bekkas: voice, guembri, guitar, oud, molo

Adelfettah Houssaini: perc., qarqabou, chorus

Hassan Souissi: flute

Majid Bekkas, oud and guembri virtuoso, guitar professor and singer, has long been a star in his home country Morocco. Over the last few years, he has found his way into the European jazz scene through his collaborations with Archie Shepp, Louis Sclavis, Flavio Boltro or Klaus Doldinger. Abdelmajid Bekkas was born and still lives in Salé, Morocco. He studied classical guitar and oud at the National Conservatory of Music and Dance in Rabat and learnt Gnawa music through the teachings of the master Ba Houmane. Gnawa appeared in the 16th century. During the conquest of Sudan, Ahmed El Mansour Dahbi set up the first trading and cultural links between Timbuktu, near Zagora where Bekkas comes from, and Marrakech. The secular music is still considered the "healer of souls" from Essaouira to Marrakech, easily understandable when you listen to the spell-binding sound of Bekkas' voice, guembri and guitar. Like a watermark, the mystery of Africa can be felt in the background, alongside the blues. Gnawa's intact purity is the essence of the authenticity. By claiming to be part of Africa, the mother of the blues and its numerous offspring such as funk, Bekkas is placing Gnawa in its primary dimension. By opening the spectrum (including elements of contemporary western music), Bekkas attains a universal status that is nurtured by the path he travelled. These include: jazz, alongside pioneers such as Peter Brötzmann, Archie Shepp, Flavio Boltro, Louis Sclavis.

With "Daymallah" Bekkas represents Morocco on the award-winning CD compilation "Desert Blues 2". He already performed at several international festivals, such as WOMEX Sevilla 2003, Gaume Jazz Festival, Huyart Festival, Grenoble Jazz Festival, Festival de Essaouira, ...

Bekkas' openness and ability to balance modernism and memory with a rare talent that knows no compromise, frees the music from the stamp of time. The memory is that of pain and wisdom, of songs that come from the slaves of Africa.

For Klaus Doldinger's "Passport to Morocco", Bekkas established the connection with the current scene in Morocco and brought the German saxophonist together with the country's best musicians. His collaboration on the album, which was released in 2006 and received a German Jazz Award, introduced him to an international audience, as did the jubilee tour to celebrate Doldinger's 70th birthday (it was an extended tour: more than 50 concerts with an audience of almost 100.000).

#### Discography:

- "Kalimba", Joachim Kühn, Majid Bekkas, Ramon Lopez (ACT 9456-2), 2007
- "Mogador", 2004
- "Cité invisible" with Beniat Achiary, Ramon Lopez, Ines Bacan and Pedro Soler in 2003.
- "Hommage à Roland Kirk" with Ramon Lopez in 2002
- "African Gnaoua Blues", 2001
- "Soudange", produced in Morocco in 1991