



Kimi Djabaté

DINDIN



For the gifted guitarist, percussionist and *balafón* (African xylophone) player **Kimi Djabaté**, music is not just his passion, it is part of his genealogy. Born in Tabato, Guinea-Bissau in 1975, Djabaté was raised by a family of griots, West African troubadours who wandered from village to village, preserving ancient oral traditions and passing down essential cultural knowledge through song. In Djabaté's exceptional new album *Dindin*, the multitalented musician carries on the customs of his griot heritage, singing entrancingly about the complexity of life in modern Africa for a broad, international audience.

Meaning "children" in Mandinga, *Dindin* meditates on the social and political situation in Africa, treating difficult themes such as religion, women's rights, poverty and education with sensitivity and nuance. Continuously optimistic about the power of music and its message to create a better future for Africans, Djabaté's magical songs remain uplifting and hopeful even as they reflect on contemporary struggles and challenges. "The future is something that I construct with the present," says Djabaté, and this is precisely what he accomplishes with his insightful lyrics and moving melodies.

Djabaté is always seeking alternative ways of incorporating the sounds of his griot heritage with new musical styles. Blending traditional Afro-Portuguese rhythms with Afrobeat grooves, electric desert blues and hints of Cuban swing, Djabaté weaves a unique tapestry of smooth and intricate sounds. The gentle notes of Djabaté's masterful *balafón* playing mix beautifully with the acoustic guitar, bass and

accordion and keyboard, played by **Paulo Borges**. *Dindin* will easily become a new favorite album for fans of **Habib Koité**, **Toumani Diabaté**, **Cesaria Evora**, **Sara Tavares** and others.

The sounds of Djabaté's childhood—from traditional Mandingo music and the West African dance music style *gumbé*, Cape Verdean *morna* and Nigerian Afrobeat to western jazz and blues—echo throughout his latest album, drawing connections between his past and the present moment. Djabaté fondly remembers impatiently waiting by the radio on Wednesday evenings to listen to the only program that featured music from outside Guinea-Bissau so he could expand his inspirations and repertoire.

Music was not a hobby for Djabaté, however, but the family occupation which he was required to contribute to from a young age. His parents gave him his first *balafón* when he was three years old to keep him entertained while his mother cooked and did housework. Soon recognized as a prodigy, Djabaté began playing at weddings and baptisms at the age of eight and was sent to a nearby village to study the *kora* a few years later. His early introduction to a variety of traditional instruments laid the foundation for his later mastery of the guitar and skill with a range of percussion instruments.

Djabaté's talents proved both a gift and a burden, as his family often forced him to sing and dance against his will, and he had little time to partake in the carefree fun and games of other children his age. In addition, Djabaté faced financial challenges, struggling even to afford food at times.

This is a theme he returns to on his new album's title track, "Dindin," on which he sings "Don't exploit children / Help children become better human beings / Don't exploit children / Educate them." In the music video for the song, joyful children play clapping games, hopscotch and jump rope, and hold signs saying "I want to be safe from war, from violence" and "I want to play." As the lyrics reflect, adults have the power to break the cycle of harm by encouraging children to grow up to become better human beings. Although Djabaté speaks with the pain of personal experience, Dindin is not a mournful song; instead, it carries hope that his message will be heard.

This commitment to justice is a primary theme of the entire album, in particular the song Omanhe, which directly translates to "something bad," reflecting Kimi's feelings towards the tradition of forced marriage. Djabaté vividly recalls his first exposure to a forced marriage when he was a young musician and asked his mother why the bride was crying. When his mother admonished him for asking questions instead of playing music, Djabaté realized his lyrics had more power than his spoken words. In this pivotal moment, he resolved to harness music's potential to inspire change. He acts on this mission in Dindin, spreading the message about Africa's social and political conditions, singing, as he puts it, "with an insider's voice."

The album opens with the funky grooves of "Afonhe," a song about the difficulties some people with being honest. "Nowadays people have some troubles with telling the truth,

to have clarity in their communication," explains Djabaté. "Because love also means trusting the other. If there is no truth things will get complicated later."

Backed by interlocking balafon and guitar lines and a soulful accordion riff, "Yensoro" is a song about giving a relationship a chance to grow before calling it off. "We had a chance / To be happy / But you didn't wait / You had me in your hands / I had you in mine / But you didn't wait."

With its striking electric rock guitar riffs, "Alidonke" is one of the highlights of the album. With hints of Tuareg desert blues, and a driving, irresistible beat, Kimi sings joyfully of love. "Smile at me / My love / Speak to me / Give me your hand / It's you that I want / The love of my life arrived / My friend has arrived."

This voice, the voice of a native African raised in the griot culture, also continues their musical traditions, such as the practice of composing tribute songs to the most influential people in your life. "Ná," meaning "mother," is a languid and soulful tune dedicated and addressed to Kimi's late mother. Despite its melancholy subject, the song assures her not to cry, since the world is a complicated place where happiness and pain are always intertwined.

Dindin is both highly personal, featuring intimate songs dedicated to family and friends, and undeniably universal in its themes of love, communication, and human connection. As Djabaté reflects and accomplishes in this remarkable album, "I'm always trying to find other ways that allow me to travel with music. Music has no boundaries."



1. Afonke (Tell Me)

Honesty isn't always easy, but this song encourages people to be more open and loving with each other to foster empathy. As Kimi points out, clear communication and mutual trust can help avoid future complications and create long and lasting friendships.

Tell me, tell me about you
Tell me what you think
Tell me what you feel
Tell me what you want

Be true and everything is going to be fine
Tell me about you
Tell me about you
Be true and everything is going to be fine

If you don't
It may not go well
You are with me
It's going to be fine

We are one
We are family
If you don't do it
It may not go well
Tell me, please be true
If you don't do it
It may not go well

Let's be clear
So we don't break our trust
So we can keep our friendship

Let's be true
We are one
The truth wins
Let's be true
We are family
We are one
Let's be true
The truth wins

2. Yensoro (You Had Me)

"Yensoro" is a soulful song about missed chances for love and getting to know others intimately. To the steady beat of the congas and shakers, Kimi yearns for lost happiness and connection, even as he reflects on how sadly unknowable the future is.

We had a chance
To be happy
But you didn't wait

You had me in your hands
I had you in mine
But you didn't wait

You had me in your hands
I had you in mine
But you didn't wait

You had me in your hands
I had you in mine
But you were not able to wait

Tomorrow
No one knows what will come
Oh, how sad (2x)

No one knows what will come tomorrow
Learn to wait
No one knows what will come tomorrow

You had me in your hands
I had you in mine
But you didn't wait for me

You were so important
You had me in your hands
But you didn't wait, everything has its time

Oh, what a pity
No one knows what will come tomorrow
Oh, how sad

3. Alidonke (Let Us Dance)

"Alidonke" is a joyful celebration of finding love and friendship and the various forms of communication--smiling, talking, caring for each other and dancing together--that strengthens these relationships.

Smile at me
My love
Speak to me
Give me your hand
It's you that I want

The love of my life arrived
My friend has arrived
Smile at me
If you don't smile at me, who will?

Speak to me
If you don't speak to me, who will?
Let's take care of each other
Let's dance
Let's dance
It's you that I want
The love of my life has arrived
My friend has arrived

4. Kambem (Union)

“Kambem” is a rallying cry for Guinea-Bissau, for Africa and for the world. It demands justice and an end to poverty, hunger, war and all forms of suffering.

Let's get united (4x)

Because the children of Guinea suffer from hunger

Hunger

Why this misunderstanding? (2x)

Let's get united (2x)

Without union

We can't give anything to our country

Let's get united

To build the country

Let's get united

To help the sons of Guinea

Let's get united (2x)

Why this misunderstanding?

Why this war?

Why this misunderstanding?

There has to be dialogue

Between us

Not war

A country doesn't evolve without laws

Without justice

For everyone

The sons of Guinea are tired

By holding hands, we will build

The sons of Guinea are suffering

Without pride in their country

The sons of Africa are suffering

5. Ná (Mother)

“Ná” is dedicated and addressed to Kimi's late mother, who he misses even more now that his father has also passed away. Despite its melancholy subject, the song assures her not to cry, since the world is a complicated place where happiness and pain are always intertwined.

Mother, mother, mother

Mother, my mother

I don't want to see you cry

Since the world exists

There is always those who are celebrating

And those who are in pain

But don't cry

Accept everything you had in this world

Don't let it bother you

Tomorrow is another day

Since the world exists

I know that you are not among us anymore
I want to thank you for everything
For what you did for me
I hope that, wherever you are, you are doing well
I feel your absence
I miss you and my dear father
Since the world exists
There is always those who are celebrating
And those who are in pain

6 . *Dindin (Children)*

Reflecting on his own childhood and the current generation growing up in Africa, Kimi implores people not to hurt or exploit children, but to educate them and listen to their individual needs. As Kimi's lyrics reflect, adults have the power to break the cycle of harm by encouraging children to grow up to become better human beings. Although Kimi speaks with the pain of personal experience, "Dindin" is not a mournful song; instead, it carries hope that his message will be heard.

Don't hurt people
They will carry that wound through life
Don't hurt the adults
And especially the children
If you set limits on the child
The frustration goes away
If you punish the child
The pain may pass

If you are sometimes rude to kids
The pain stays longer
But it may go away
If you hurt a child
They will carry that wound for life
If you hurt people
They will carry that wound through life
If you harm a child
They will carry that wound through life
Adults listen

Listen

Educate your children
Don't exploit children
Help them to grow up
Don't exploit the children
Educate the children

Don't hurt the children
Help children become better human beings
Don't hurt them
No one knows what they'll become
Don't hurt children
Don't exploit the children
Na na na na na na na naaa
Don't hurt the children (8x)
Don't hurt them

Don't exploit the children
Help children become better human beings

Don't exploit the children
Educate the children
Don't exploit the children

Don't hurt the children
No one knows what they'll become
Don't hurt the children
Help the children become better human beings
Help children become better human beings
Na na na na na na na naaaa
Don't hurt the children (3x)

7. Omanhe (Something Bad)

"Omanhe" directly translates to "something bad", reflecting Kimi's feelings towards the tradition of forced marriage. Kimi was first exposed to the practice when he was a young musician playing at a wedding. When he asked his mother why the bride was crying, she admonished him for asking questions. This moment has stuck with him ever since and inspired him to write a song critiquing the practice he has always found unjust.

Don't force someone to marry another they don't like
If someone doesn't like the other, they don't have to marry
Don't force someone to marry another they don't like

Listen
This isn't right
Stop it

This has to stop

My people
It's wrong to force a marriage
We all have the right to choose

Willingly
We will understand each other
And we will support each other in hard times

Don't force someone to marry another they don't like
If someone doesn't like the other, they don't have to marry
Don't force someone to marry another they don't like

Listen
This isn't right
Stop it
This has to stop

Listen
This isn't right
My people, why do you force a marriage?

8. Sano

"Sano" follows the griot tradition of singing tributes to the special people in your life to grant them strength and good luck. This song is named for Kimi's friend, and praises his altruism, his kindness and his support and continuity of griot culture.

Sano, my dear friend Sano
Someone so kind
You support griot culture
You help the helpless
Gomes, you support griot culture
Gomes, you are kind
You support the culture
Gomes, you help the artists

I'm proud of you
You believe in me
You came from a humble family
Your family is proud of you

You are Maudo Sano's son
You are Maimuna Dali Baldebanna's son
You conquered the people from the four corners of the world
And you gained their trust
Someone altruistic that thinks about the wellbeing of all

I'm sure that your father is happy for you
That your mother is happy for you
That your auntie is very happy for you
That your grandmother is happy for you

You support griot culture
You help the helpless, Gomes
You conquered the people from the four corners of the world
And you gained their trust

9. Mbembalu (My Grandparents)

This song gives thanks to Kimi's grandparents, praising each of their names and the griot heritage they passed along, allowing Kimi to be who is today.

Nowadays I make music
Thanks to my grandparents
I honor my family

My griot heritage
My ancestors left me
My music heritage

My grandfather Badjali Djabaté
My grandfather Ansumane Djabaté
My grandfather Mamadu Djabaté
My grandfather Yaya Djabate

My ancestors left me
My music heritage
My sisters, my uncles
My grandmother Mmá Camara
My grandmother Suntukum Sissoko
My father Ganle Djabaté

10. Mana Mana (Irresponsibility)

This song is an earnest plea to end domestic violence against women and respect their autonomy.

They are suffering

They are sick

Enough

They are suffering

They are sick

Stop mistreating them

Irresponsible

Yes, yes, irresponsible

Don't hurt them, don't argue

Don't hurt them (4x)

Yes, yes, irresponsible

Don't hurt them, don't argue (3x)

Don't hurt them (4x)

Yes, yes, irresponsible

Don't hurt them

Don't argue

Don't hurt them (5x)

11. Djugu Djugu (Malicious)

Why do some people act maliciously towards others who have done nothing to hurt them? This is the question Kimi ponders in "Djugu Djugu," admonishing those who harm the innocent, explaining simply that "it's not a good attitude" to have.

Let's stop being mean to each other

We don't gain anything from this

Why this wickedness?

Why this feeling?

Why are you willing to hurt someone who doesn't want to hurt you?

Why this wickedness?

Why this feeling?

Why are you willing to hurt someone who doesn't want to hurt you?

Why do you hurt someone who never hurt you?

That's not a good attitude

Why do you hurt someone who never did anything to you?

That's not a good attitude

Ye ye ye ye

Wickedness

It's not a good attitude

Wickedness

It's not a good attitude



Produced by Kimi Djabaté & Paulo Borges
Recorded in Almada, Portugal
Mixed by Jacob Edgar & Lane Gibson
Mastered by Lane Gibson Recording & Mastering
Photos by Rita Carmo

Musicians:

Kimi Djabaté - Vocals (1-11), Acoustic Guitar (1-11),
Bongos (1,6), Balafón (1-3, 7-10), Claps (7), Mola (3)
Marcos Alves - Percussion (1-10)
Chico Santos - Bass (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10)
Mamadi Djabaté - Electric Guitar (1-4, 6-10)
Paulo Borges - Keyboard (1-3, 5, 6), Accordion (2, 9, 10)
Miroca Paris - Congas (2-5, 8-10), Bongos (7)
Fernando Fafe - Vocals (7)
Mbye Ebrima - Kora (5, 8, 9)
Elmano Coelho & Daniel Salomé - Saxophones (4)

All songs by Kimi Djabaté

Cumbancha Music Publishing (BMI)



Raised in a family of griots in Guinea-Bissau and now living in Lisbon, **Kimi Djabaté's** music blends ancient Manding traditions, funky Afrobeat grooves, electric desert blues and acoustic Afro-Portuguese rhythms.

1	<i>Afonhe</i>	4:17
2	<i>Yensoro</i>	4:10
3	<i>Alidonke</i>	4:22
4	<i>Kambem</i>	4:04
5	<i>Ná</i>	3:33
6	<i>Dindin</i>	4:19
7	<i>O Manhe</i>	4:22
8	<i>Sano</i>	4:01
9	<i>Mbembatu</i>	3:40
10	<i>Mana Mana</i>	3:41
11	<i>Djugu Djugu</i>	3:18

