

TINARIWEN

Tinariwen are guitar-poets from the southern Sahara desert. They are icons of freedom and resistance among their own people, the nomadic Touareg of the Sahara. The word 'Tinariwen' is the plural of Ténéré which simply means 'desert', in Tamashek, the language of the Touareg.

The group was founded by Ibrahim Ag Alhabib, Hassan Ag Touhami and Inteyeden Ag Ableline in Tamanrasset, southern Algeria, at the end of the 1970s. It was a period of great suffering in the desert, due to the catastrophic droughts of the early 1970s, which had decimated the animal herds and almost destroyed the Touareg's ancient nomadic way of life. Tinariwen began to write songs describing the pain of exile, the longing for lost homes and families, the struggle for political and cultural freedom, and the rigors of every day life in the desert. Their music became the soundtrack for a whole generation of exiled Touareg youth, living a hand-to-mouth existence in exile in Algeria and Libya.

It was not only the subject matter but the sound that was radically different. Ibrahim transposed the traditional melodies of the Touareg on the electric guitar, mixing them with blues, rock, pop, Berber and Arabic influences. Tinariwen created a modern desert rock sound, whose harsh simplicity was well suited to the realities of their situation.

Lured into rebel training camps in Libya by Colonel Gaddafi in the early 1980s, Tinariwen became the official mouthpiece of the Touareg rebellion, and their songs carried the message of awareness and resistance to the far corners of the desert. In 1990 all the founding members of the group took part in the Touareg rebellions in northern Mali and Niger.

After the end of the rebellion, Tinariwen emerged as a desert legend. They joined up with the French group Lo'Jo to organize the first Festival in the Desert in 2001. That was the year that they also first starting touring in Europe. Now with three successful albums released, including the latest 'Aman Iman', numerous tours of Europe, USA and the Far East, appearances at the most prestigious festivals and a BBC Award for World Music,

Tinariwen have emerged as one of the most exciting and successful bands from Africa in recent times.

Tinariwen are the ambassadors of one of the oldest and proudest people on earth. They play their music to teach us about the beauty of their desert home, the strength and dignity of the nomad and his way of life, and the problems of poverty, oppression and lack of development which continue to hamper their progress.



"The desert is my home. I've never been attracted by the idea of emigrating to Paris or Los Angeles. It's in the desert that I feel that I belong, You have to live simply in the desert. It's the only way. Simplicity is freedom."

IBRAHIM AG ALHABIB

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"One of the most extraordinary and unlikely success stories of the last few years"
The Daily Telegraph (UK)

"If you make one discovery this year, make it Tinariwen." ***Marie Claire (UK)***

"Tinariwen are the stuff of legend in these parts [the Malian desert]. Their story says much about the power of music in Africa, and about the recent positive turn of events in Mali." ***Vanity Fair (USA)***

"The novelty of Tinariwen's backstory got people interested, but anyone who gave a serious listen to this guitar-slinging band of nomadic touaregs from the Sahara in northern Mali was hooked." ***Relix (USA)***.

"...I still maintain that they are not only the best world music but the best rock and roll band in the world, full stop." ***Financial Times (UK)***

"Tinariwen capture the poetry and hardships of nomadic life and exile in hypnotic, modal vocals and a tangle of sidwinding riffs that sound like a mirage come true: Keith Richards, Ry Cooder and Ali Farka Toure picking side by side under an unforgiving sun." ***Rolling Stone (USA)***

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