



Songhoy Blues – Biography

It takes a lot to shake a seasoned performer like Gary Clark Jr., but even he admitted, “I’m scared to go on after these guys.” The year was 2015, and the venue was Somerset House in London. The band Gary Clark Jr. didn’t want to follow? Songhoy Blues.

Hailing from the northern regions of Mali in West Africa, Songhoy Blues has been turning heads around the world, introducing fans to the culture of Mali and the country’s musical potency. Following the arrival of Islamic jihadists in the band’s northern hometowns of Gao and Diré along with sharia law which banned the playing of music, Aliou Touré (singer/rhythm guitarist), Garba Touré (lead guitarist), and Oumar Touré (bassist) met in the southern capital of Bamako where it was safe to perform. Fueled by their shared north Malian heritage as Songhoy people, the three formed Songhoy Blues in 2012 as a way of addressing their country’s geopolitical conflict and their exile from their homelands. Today, with the addition of young gunslinger Drissa Koné on drums, Songhoy Blues brings Mali’s story to fans around the globe.

Songhoy Blues’ music has been described as everything from “desert blues” to “punk” to “African rock.” All those labels may apply, but Songhoy Blues plays one thing and one thing only: Malian music. As Aliou Touré explains, “We are a Malian band. That’s it. Between who you are, and what you do, who you are will always take over what you do. And for us, our selves are much more important than what we do.” To hear Songhoy Blues is to take a musical journey spanning hundreds of years and hear traditional Malian styles upgraded for modernity through immaculate, virtuosic electric guitar, heavy Saharan rhythms, and lyrics that call for peace, change, love, and a good time on a Saturday night.

Songhoy Blues quickly gained traction, landing a spot on the 2013 Africa Express record produced by Damon Albarn, *Maison Des Jeunes*, with their hit single “Soubour.” The band has since toured worldwide almost nonstop, playing major festivals such as Bonnaroo and Glastonbury and landing on *Rolling Stone* magazine’s list of “10 New Artists You Need to Know” in 2015. From intimate bars, to festivals, to famed concert venues such as Royal Albert Hall, Songhoy Blues brings the same high intensity energy that inevitably, seating be damned, has audiences dancing and applauding.

Songhoy Blues is deeply committed to addressing and alleviating the conflict and stresses in Mali. Their 2015 Nick Zinner-produced debut LP, *Music in Exile*, and 2017 follow up, *Résistance*, feature numerous songs addressing refugees, patience, and the need to rebuild to Mali. They are spokespersons for WaterAID and advocates for environmental consciousness, having performed at the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York City. Songhoy Blues is heavily featured in the award-winning 2015 documentary, *They Will Have to Kill Us First*, a film about Mali’s geopolitical conflict and

its effects on musicians in the country. The band has also collaborated with UK-based journalist and author Andy Morgan for Rebel Sounds as part of the “Culture Under Attack” series at the Imperial War Museum in London.

Songhoy Blues is currently hard at work polishing up their 3rd studio album for 2020. The first two were direct reflections of their lives: *Music in Exile* and *Résistance*. It’s no different this time around, except *ir baadala*—Songhoy for “We don’t give a fuck.”

**For more information about Songhoy Blues, please contact
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