

## Hailu Mergia & His Classical Instrument: Shemonmuanaye



**Hailu Mergia** is a one-man band.

In 1985 master accordionist and veteran Walias Band leader/arranger/keyboardist released the **Hailu Mergia & His Classical Instrument / Shemonmuanaye** cassette. The tape is a nostalgic effort to bring back the vintage accordion sound of his youth. Hailu was already celebrated for his work with the industry-shifting Addis Ababa ethio-jazz and funk outfit the Walias Band, and he pressed forward using new tools to reshape the popular sounds of the past.

Adding a Moog synthesizer, Rhodes electric piano and rhythm machine to the harmonic layering of his accordion, he creates hauntingly psychedelic instrumentals. These songs draw from famous traditional and modern Ethiopian songs, as Hailu matches Amhara, Tigrinya and Oromo melodies to otherworldly flavors soaked in jazz and blues. The result is a lush, futuristic landscape, balancing Ethiopian music's signature pentatonic modes and melodic shape with beautiful analog synth flair.

Hailu Mergia was born in Debre Birhan, Ethiopia in 1946. He went to school in Addis Ababa and then joined the army music department. He was later singing in small bars as a freelance musician when he joined a casual band, touring across the Ethiopian provinces as a singer and accordion player for almost a year. After the group broke up, he started performing in nightclubs across the city. He and his mates formed Walias Band and did something no other band in Ethiopian nightclub history had done: they started buying their own musical instruments. Until then the club owners were supplying the instruments and had the power to fire musicians at will.

Following eight years playing at the Hilton Hotel, Hailu and Walias Band went to the United States and toured widely in 1982-1983. Despite breaking ground as the first private band to tour the States and play state dinners at the Derg government palace, some of the band stayed in America while others went back to Addis.

After settling in America, Hailu made a one-man band recording with accordion for the first time, mixing in Rhodes electric piano, Moog synthesizer and a rhythm machine. That was 1985. This recording was inspired by the early memories of his first instrument, the accordion.

Nowadays he's making his living as a self-employed taxi driver at Dulles International Airport while continuing to record and practice his music as often as possible.

The reissue of this recording brings back a moment when Ethiopian music was shifting from acoustic-based performances to recordings using more and more synthesized elements. While the resulting sound of that shift has its critics Hailu Mergia's initial experiments with "switched-on" solo instrumentals based on Ethiopian folk and popular music captures a singular feeling dripping in ambiance and a very human emotional energy.

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**A W E S O M E  
T A P E S  
F R O M  
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A**

01. Shemonmuanaye 06:41
02. Sewnetuwa 05:52
03. Laloye 05:53
04. Wegene 05:24
05. Hari Meru Meru 06:01
06. Amrew Demkew 06:22
07. Anchin Alay Alegn 06:24
08. Ambasel 03:45
09. Hebo Lale 04:20
10. Belew Beduby 04:22
11. Shilela 03:40

CATALOG #: **ATFA006**  
RELEASE DATE: **June 25, 2013**  
FORMAT: **CD/LP/DIGITAL/TAPE**  
CD LIST PRICE: **\$14.98**  
LP LIST PRICE: **\$23.98**  
DIGITAL PRICE: **\$9.99**  
CD BOX LOT: **40**  
LP BOX LOT: **25**  
Units Per Set: **2xLP; 1xCD**  
GENRE: **WORLD**  
KEY MARKETS: **D.C., L.A., New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Austin, Seattle, Portland**  
VINYL NOT RETURNABLE  
NOT EXPORTABLE

CD:  
#656605560427



LP:  
#656605560410



Digital:  
#656605560465



### Selling Points:

- \*Fair trade music—artists receive 50/50 split of all proceeds
- \*New element to build on popularity of popular Ethiopian jazz/soul releases



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