

Hailu Mergia & Dahlak Band *Wede Harer Guzo*



Hailu Mergia & Dahlak Band's *Wede Harer Guzo* is the third release on Awesome Tapes From Africa for Ethiopian keyboard and accordion maestro. In the years since Shemonmuanaye, Mergia has revamped his touring career, playing festivals and clubs worldwide, including a recent tour supporting Beirut. By 1978, Addis Ababa's nightlife was facing challenges. The

ruling Derg regime imposed curfews, banning citizens from the streets after midnight until 6:00 am. But that didn't stop some people from dancing and partying through the night. Bands would play from evening until daybreak and people would stay at the clubs until curfew was lifted in the morning.

One key denizen of Addis' musical golden age, Hailu Mergia, was preparing a follow-up to his seminal *Tche Belew* LP with the famed Walias Band. It was the band's only full-length record and it had been a success. But his Hilton house band colleagues were a bit tied up recording cassettes with different vocalists. Still Mergia, amidst recording and gigs with the Walias, was also eager to make another recording of his instrumental-focused arrangements. So he went to the nearby Ghion Hotel, another upmarket outpost with a popular nightclub. Dahlak Band was the house band at Ghion at the time. Together they made this tape *Wede Harer Guzo* right there in the club during the band's afternoon rehearsal meetings, with sessions lasting three days.

Dahlak Band catered to a slightly more youthful, local audience, while Mergia's main gig with the Walias at Addis' swankiest hotel had a mixed audience that included wealthy Ethiopians, foreign diplomats and older folks from abroad. Therefore, their sets featured lighter fare during dinnertime and a less rollicking selection of jazz and r&b. Meanwhile, Dahlak was known more for the mainly soul and Amharic jams they served up for hours two nights a week to a younger crowd. Mergia released *Wede Harer Guzo* ("Journey to Harer," a city in eastern Ethiopia) with Sheba Music Shop, which was located in the Piazza district but has long since shut down. His cassette copy is the only known source we could find. Jessica Thompson at Coast Mastering managed to restore the recording to clean up layers of hiss, flutter and distorted frequencies, made worse by years of storage. Although there are some remaining sonic artifacts of the era's recording and cassette duplicating quality, this reissue captures the band's inimitable vibe.

Recalling the audience's positive reaction to *Wede Harer Guzo*'s novel arrangements, he says it sold well and found many fans. However, as no trace of the tape can be found online, there's no indication as to why the cassette appears largely forgotten until now.

A W E S O M E
T A P E S
F R O M
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01. Embuwa Bey Lamitu 06:05
02. Sintayehu 06:48
03. Bati Bati 07:04
04. Migibima Moltual 06:26
05. Yene Nesh Wey (Amalele) 04:38
06. Wede Harer Guzo 06:35
07. Yemanesh Ayinama 07:11
08. Almaz Eyasebkush 05:40
09. Anchin Kfu Ayinkash 05:24
10. Minibelesh 05:57

CATALOG #: **ATFA021**

RELEASE DATE: **6/17/16**

Format: **LP, CD, Digital**

LP BOX LOT: **25**

CD BOX LOT: **40**

UNITS PER SET: **2xLP; 1xCD**

GENRE: **WORLD**

KEY MARKETS: **DC, LA, NYC, San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle, Minneapolis, Austin**

VINYL NOT RETURNABLE

TERRITORY RESTRICTIONS:

NONE

LP: **#751937436218**



CD: **#751937436225**



Selling Points:

- Third ATFA reissue for Hailu Mergia
- Super-rare, first time available outside Ethiopia
- Follows successful career revamp & worldwide tours
- Critical praise for prior Hailu Mergia titles from NY Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, etc.
- Pitchfork: "[Hailu Mergia] is not quite like anything else you've ever heard."

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA

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