



Zemelewa Zieti

Standout Track: No. 2, the head-nodding “Zion Do,” an ode to the divine origins of creativity, knowledge, and inspiration. Ivorian musicians Yeoue Narcisse and rhythm guitarist/vocalist Tiende Laurent trade vocals, and the remaining instrumentation (flute, horns, harmonica, and more guitar) comes courtesy of the band’s American half, based partly in Maryland.

Musical Motivation: Drummer Alex Owre and guitarist Michael Shereikis—who is also a member of Chopsteeth—met Narcisse and Laurent in 1997. “Laurent and Narcisse first taught Alex and I this song on a beach outside of Abidjan, playing it on a beat-up acoustic guitar and keeping time on coconut shells,” says Shereikis. “Their harmonies and rhythmic intensity drew us in and really that was Zieti’s ur moment.” They played together for two years, until Owre and Shereikis moved back to the United States. Then, for the next decade, Côte d’Ivoire become embroiled in a brutal civil war. Zemelewa was a project on hold for nearly 13 years.

Power Ballad: “We learned [the song’s] lyrical power when we traveled with the band to a city in the far Western region of Cote d’Ivoire,” says Shereikis. “There the audiences understood the language and the rhythms of this particular song. Young and old were all dancing in a circle, and when the song was over, they made us play it again right away, to more dancing. As we finished the second take, the skies opened up and we had to close down our open-air concert.” —Steve Kiviat

Listen to “Zion Do” at washingtoncitypaper.com/go/zieti.

