



The **Aly Keïta Trio** embodies the pulsating spirit of the Berlin jazz scene. Coming from different cultural backgrounds, the three musicians found a common language on stage as they explored one of the most buzzing jazz hubs of Europe. Today they have released their first album **Balafon Evolution (One World Records, 2026)**, where the Ivorian balafon virtuoso Aly Keïta showcases new horizons for balafon in improvised music, conquering the peaks of balafon possibilities, wandering between groovy African rhythms, spectacular polyphony and elements of jazz, and combining them into a fusion that is both

futuristic and deeply set in roots. In the album *Balafon Evolution*, the Aly Keïta Trio establishes **a new level of balafon artistry**, creating afrofuturistic soundscapes that transcend cultural boundaries. With a minimalist line-up of balafon, electric bass and drums, Keïta's music completely fills the space and sounds **remarkably dynamic**. Aiming to play the balafon like a piano, he focuses on melodies, creating vibrant harmonies with the support of Roberto Badoglio's experimental bass improvisations and Marcel van Cleef's original drumming.

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Rating: ★★★★★

Author: Nigel Williamson



Hailing from Côte d'Ivoire but now based in Berlin, we first came across the *balafon* player Aly Keïta as part of the Trio Ivoire, whose 2000 debut album was an intriguing exercise in Afro-jazz fusion. Since then, he's made a number of impressive albums, both solo and collaborative, bridging contemporary jazz and African tradition. But this mostly instrumental set may just be his finest to date. Recorded with a new trio featuring Dutch drummer Marcel van Cleef and Italian bassist Roberto Badoglio, the balafon has rarely sounded so versatile: deeply rooted in African tradition and yet infused with a cosmic, futuristic twist. On 'Tarafnko', for example, Keïta locks into a timeless West African groove in the style of the Malian virtuoso Lassana Diabaté, while on 'Adjame Street' he makes his instrument sound like a modern vibraphone, evoking US jazz maestro Gary Burton. At his most audacious, as on 'Mandingo Galaxy', he manages to combine both approaches into one glorious mash-up.



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Aly Keita, balafon, kalimba, vocals

Aly Keita was born in Abidjan in a Griot family. His instrumental brilliance and spectacular performance has enabled him to work with jazz and world music legends such as Joe Zawinul, Trilok Gurtu and many others. Keita made his debut as a band-leader in 2008 with the album "Akwaba Inisene", which caused a sensation throughout Europe. It immediately reached the top 20 of the World Music Charts Europe. After a long wait, the extraordinary instrumentalist comes back with his new album, "Balafon Evolution" (One World Records, 2026), showcasing the latest achievements in balafon music. Having won the German Jazz Prize, Aly Keita confirms once again his rightfully earned place at the top of the balafon scene, which he has expanded far beyond his instrument. This revolutionary afrofuturistic recording places balafon in the center of jazz fusion improvisation.

Roberto Badoglio, e-bass

Recognised as one of the most intriguing and innovative bass players among the new generation, the Italian bassist Roberto Badoglio joined the trio in 2014. He is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music, who has won numerous prestigious music competitions in Italy. Experimenting with 5 and 6 string basses and various pedals, Roberto is a true "fusion reactor" of the trio.

Marcel van Cleef, drums, percussions

Before and after studying at the High School of the Arts in Arnhem, Marcel van Cleef honed his sound by performing with countless bands, covering a wide range of styles, from heavy rock and jazz to world music. His powerful and distinctive drumming has featured on numerous recordings, leaving a lasting mark across rock, jazz and world music albums.

Mariam Koné (special guest), vocal

Mariam Koné is a Malian singer, music teacher and a member of the supergroup Les Amazones d'Afrique. Koné's first solo album "Dakan" was released in 2013. Its style is soft flowing traditional African pop, with dub influences and electric instrumentation. It was produced by the Irishman Liam Farrell a.k.a. Doctor L.



Aly Keita Trio feat. Mariam Koné
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