

Clockwise from upper right:
Justin Adams, Juldeh Camara,
Salah Dawson Miller
PHOTO Gavin Matheson

GLOBAL RHYTHM

When and how did you first become aware of the connections between African music and Western genres like blues and rock?

Growing up in the Middle East, I never thought of them as all that different. I always felt there was at least a bit of a connection. As far back as *Sgt. Pepper's*, I was hearing connections with Egyptian string music and Jordanian music.

How did you hook up with Juldeh Camara?

He phoned up out of the blue. It's not every day you get a call from a griot. He'd heard and played along with my album *Desert Road*, and he liked the way it was impressionistic and contemporary but still used traditional music. I'd been listening to his music on a Gambian CD I'd acquired and was hugely transformed by those Sahel sounds. It seemed it was all meant to happen—like the time I'd spent in Africa with Tinariwen and in the Mississippi Delta with Robert Plant.

Do you plan to continue working with bands like Tinariwen, and do you think the same style of fusion you explore on *Soul Science* is going to find its way into your future endeavors?

Whenever I plan things too much, they tend to not work out. I've gone too far down the current route to come up with a convincing jazz album or whatever. I'm pretty open to all kinds of music, but I really like those desert trance rhythms—those sweet-sour rhythms.

Do you know what your next project is going to be?

Touring with Juldeh. It's really something to play this music live as just a trio—myself and Juldeh, and our fantastic percussionist Salah Dawson Miller. I'd love to come to the U.S. and play, although it's tough getting over there these days with financial concerns and visas and all. It would be great to make another album with Juldeh, and there's a new Tinariwen album being discussed, so there's a lot happening right now.

Q&A with
JUSTIN ADAMS



JUSTIN ADAMS & JULDEH CAMARA *Soul Science* World Village

In addition to being the guitarist in Robert Plant's band, Justin Adams has also produced two Tinariwen albums, helped to organize Mali's Festival In The Desert, and released a solo disc (*Desert Road*) that took many a musical cue from the Sahara. On *Soul Science*, he teams with

Gambian vocalist and ritti (single-stringed fiddle) player Juldeh Camara to present further evidence that the roots of the blues—and, by extension, rock and roll—lie in West Africa. The two succeed brilliantly, splitting the difference between the Upper Niger and the Mississippi Delta with a sharp, swaying onslaught of songs that rock with muscular, power-chord swagger and retain the tart, Arabic-rooted griot majesty that indelibly colors the music in West African hues. Expertly assisted by percussionist Salah Dawson Miller and bassist Billy Fuller, Adams and Camara prove to be very soulful collaborators indeed.

— TOM ORR