

PART TWO: "Dooyo" by Dur-Dur Band

Traditional Somali music was influenced by cultural exchanges with the Arab peninsula and Zanzibar, and it was even influenced by the Indian raga. Somali music is pentatonic, meaning that only five pitches are used per octave in contrast to a heptatonic scale such as the major scale. This is maintained in modern contexts by bands like the Mogadishu group Dur-Dur Band. The oud is also a staple in Somali music, and it is a pear-shaped short-necked chordophone (like the electric guitar, or example) that is also played throughout Western Asia.

After Somalia received independence from Italy in 1960, it was governed by an authoritarian regime. Mohamed Siad Barre became the President of the Somali Democratic Republic after a coup d'état in 1969. Barre said he would adapt a strict "Scientific Socialism" to the needs of the Somali people, and he called on the musicians to be part of the revolution, hoping to better align the country with socialism. Schools became social and musical institutions, and bands were employed by the government. Female musicians were promoted as a women's campaign. To make Somali music its best, Barre imported music from musicians like Elvis Presley, James Brown, Bob Marley, and Etta James. He also allowed in instruments such as the electric guitar, trumpets, and synthesizers.

Dur-Dur Band's music definitely influenced by these instruments, their *Volume 5* (1987) song, "Dooyo" (meaning "war party" or "attack force") features prominently the electric guitar, electric bass, and synthesizer to create their distinctive funk/soul/disco

sound. Yet, the band still maintains the use of congas, a pentatonic female vocal line above a five note chordophone-heavy accompaniment. Dur-Dur Band's prominent female singer Sahra Dawo said, "In the beginning, we used to sing and dance with American music. And later on, we decided to shape our own music in such a way that it is comfortable enough for people to dance with it — for people to enjoy it."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, they were not bringing the West to Somalia; they were bringing Somalia to Somalia.

Thanks to artists like Dur-Dur Band, the music scene in Mogadishu in the 1980s was flourishing, but the dictatorship was beginning to crumble. Barre was forced to promise free elections and other reforms. Some dissident musical groups popped up in the underground, critical of communist rule. Dur-Dur Band was one of these few bands not run by the government ministry, and were very popular in Mogadishu nightclubs. By 1991 Barre was forced out of office, and the government was overthrown in a bloody civil war; in a way, the Western musical influences that were brought in by the government also tore it down. Dur-Dur Band fled to Ethiopia in 1992, where they released another album and "[took] responsibility for what happened in Somalia," recognizing the political nature of their music and the immense impact it had on the political situation in Somalia.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NPR, "A Funky-Fresh Sound From Somalia, With A Political History," May 05, 2013, Accessed April 29, 2018.

<https://www.npr.org/2013/05/05/180871371/a-funky-fresh-sound-from-somalia-with-a-political-history>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.