

# SAHARA HAUL

## HAUL MUSIC LA MÚSICA HAUL

Sahrawi culture, the **AZAWAN**, spanning a wide area of the Sahara desert, known as Bidan, or Trab El Bidan, covers the territory of Western Sahara, Mauretania, northern Mali and the southwest of Algeria.

With their country occupied by Morocco and cultural events banned, it is the Sahrawi population in exile which not only keeps the Haul, the music of the Sahrawi, but also does evolve it.

The **HAUL** is a music of alluvium that has developed from many different influences: Berber, Arabic, Sudanese (brought by the caravans crossing the desert from one end to another) and the Black, from the South.

It is ruled by a modal system, consisting of five scales, subdivided in major and minor.

The meeting and the praise, the two major pillars of what form the Haul to be extended by what was emerging from the invasion and the revolutionary process.

## THE INSTRUMENTS LOS INSTRUMENTOS

**TIDINIT** is the basic instrument of the haul. It is a small lute with a wooden box and of different forms, covered by a skin. It has four strings of which two are played and two are sounding sympathetic. The neck is round, very rudimentary. It is played by men.

**TEBAL**, is a drum of a wooden box in the form of a large bowl and a skin of goat or camel. Usually some little stones are left inside sounding when beaten. It is played by women. It is as important as the tidinit. **RASSAM** is a more larger tebal with a bass sound and played with the **mungar**, a stick.

Obsolete, we can cite the **ardin** - a kind of a very simple kora, of 6 to 12 strings, played by women and the two shepherd flutes: **gasba** of long wooden and the **neyfara**, a traverse flute.

Today the **electric guitar** has replaced the tidinit. There is a trend for the keyboard use as well as an opening to other percussions inclusive the drums.

## THE SCALES LAS GAMAS

### SCALE 1

The first scales, **Kar**, are the most important and ancient. They are interpreted by the tidinit and they are the basic scales of **Medej**. Its origin lies in the south, in Senegal and Mali.

**Entamas**, the minor scale, is used to praise the distinguished and to raise the moral with different stories about life.

**Seinikar** is the major scale, with a lively atmosphere, breathing happiness. It is used in emotional contexts and the description of travel and adventures.

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## SCALE 2

The second scales, **Fagu**, has a lively and animating character, **Tehssam** related to men and the **Teharar** to women. Usually they are associated with poetry like *Lebteit* and connected to scenes of war and feats of courage, strength and pride.

Commenting their origin, the Sahrawi explain it as follows: Once a music poet who was accompanying the men to war, created a music to encourage the soldiers and thus was born the **Tehssam**.

Back home they found the women very angry. To soothe them the musician created a more soft and sentimental music, the scale **Teharar** was born.

## SCALE 3

The third scales, **Sennima**, have identified creators.

**Acaures**, the major scale, with characteristic melodies attributed to *Haiba*, is ideal for romantic poetry.

The minor, **Ezrag**, called also *Bilau* in honour of its creator, a slave who had to awaken his master, a Mauretanian prince, with the sound of the *tidinit*. Merging the above scales with **Acaures** he invented his own style: how to wake up princes, soft and ornamental.

## SCALE 4

The fourth scales, **Raju**, are very pure ones, difficult of interpretation and coupled with the very feelings.

**Tenetyuga** and **Liyen**, the latter characterized by its remarkable expression, are the scales which complete the older music of the **AZAWAN**, done by griots.

## SCALE 5

**Yameangara**, the fifth scales, are the mixture of all previous.

**Aadal** and **Beigui** are the minor and the major scale.  
Melancholy, nostalgia and sorrow dominate the subjects.

## THE RHYTHMS LOS RITMOS

When there is no guitar by hand, women with their drums are enough to accompany their songs. They are dominating the rhythms, many of them are related to everyday sounds.

**Chara** is the oldest of all, and derives from of the own up desert.

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**Agarran** reminds of a camel race.

**Serbat** is a kind of a slower Chaara. It combines almost with all scales.

**Bleida** is a specific dance rhythm that carries that name. Majestic and powerful.

**Agassar** combines the Agarran and Tgalfi.

**Tgalfi**, the first rhythm out of West Africa, reminds of the sinuous movement of the snake.

About **Dubka** it is said that it came with the Spaniards. True is that it allows the fusion with modern rhythms such as reggae.

**Medra** accompanies the entry of the Haul in a slow and sensitive form.

## DANCES EL BAILE

In the Haul the dances are clearly showing the distance to other Arab countries, which abounds in the dialog between hip and pelvic kicks and the rhythmic accents. In the Haul the movement of arms and hands, with the small fingers shake are fundamental and very decorative. The body however is soft and stylish.

Many of the collective dances of the Sahrawi have a narrative character, even educational, like the **Tuiza**, which mimics different trades. This community sense also allows as well solo or partner dances to a more sensual expression even a gallant challenge.

Other dances are associated with popular celebrations, festivals, weddings and are more spontaneous and informal, releasing an explosion of joy.

Chaara, Serbat and Bleida are the mostly used rhythms.

## POETRY LA POESÍA

Poetry occupies a privileged place in the Sahrawi culture and is intimately linked to music. The beat and the style of the poems are reflected in the music scales.

The poets are integrated in the groups of traditional music and it's their part to open the concerts. The guitar supports the poems in a free way which for moments sounds like rap music.

In reality the figure of the Sahrawi poet is to compare with the griots of West Africa. It is the poet who encourages the troops before the battle, praising the virtues of a leader, welcomes visitors, maintaining the morale of the camps and who is a faithful chronicler of what happens.

The meetings of the poets are among the most exceptional and interesting cultural events.

The language used is Hassania, although recently a generation of Sahrawi came out with poetry in Castilian. Poemario Sahara is their blog.

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## THE GUITAR LA GUITARRA

It is said that **Sidati Uld Abba**, the father of Dimi Mint Abba, introduced the guitar into the AZAWAN in the late sixties.

When the group **El Uali** was founded by the Polisario, to present on stage the break with the traditional tense - since then the need to belong to a **igawen** family to make music was no longer binding - and with the creation of the music of the revolutionary cause, the guitar definitely came into the Haul.

The adaption of the guitar instead of the titinit has been exemplary. The finger techniques with the right hand are the basics.

**Barma** moves the thumb and index finger between two or more string as if counting money.

**Lefgea** uses the index finger to move between the strings in a fast and continuous manner.

**Elmenfaga** moves the index and the middle finger between the strings, two by two, up and down.

**Elbakma** mutes the strings in a different way from the above.

## PAST TIMES & PRESENT TIMES AYER Y HOY

The efforts of a handful of musicians to keep the Haul alive raises questions that until quite recently have been unthinkable; such as the exclusive tradition of women playing the drums and the traditional instrumental format.

**Nayim Alal**, aware that the subdivision of the top guitar frets to obtain the quarter-tone implies a limitation of the guitar, proposes an alternative way to solve the tuning of the traditional scales.

The dramatic situation of the Sahrawi people in the refugee camps, where the physical survival is the main problem - after the invasion of the homeland - makes inviable any investment in musical instruments with which could be acquired a conclusive modernization of the Haul.

During the Congress of Sahrawi Culture, held in December 2008 in the wilaya of Auserd, the desire of overcoming became patently clear. The young and not so young, they have all the time in the world to work on this update of the music, but they remain empty-handed.

Instruments and workshops, with the possible collaboration of musicians who like to share their experience with young Sahrawi, is all what is needed.

## ONE GUITAR FOR THE SAHARA

It is urgent to form a new generation of guitarists who can make more bearable the long wait at the edge of the desert, contributing new energies to the struggle of regaining the usurped land.

Just **One Guitar for the Sahara** is asked for.

If you have a guitar that rests in your store after serving you for many years and if you believe that in the hands of a Sahrawi can sound again with renewed impetus, we are committed to hand it over to him.

The Sahrawi, for over more than three decades in exile, are safeguarding one of its most respected assets: the Culture. The groups of traditional music at the moment are going through difficult times with the shortage of guitarists.

The electric guitar - which in the seventies replaced the tidinit - together with the tebal are the basic instruments accompanying the songs, dances and poetry.

In the camps in the Algerian Hamada, where thousands of Sahrawi are resisting, the electric guitars at the moment can be counted on the fingers of one hand. While ten years ago each wilaya had six or seven guitar players, today there are not enough guitarists for concerts or to encourage weddings. Not even the young people can form their groups of modern music because of the difficulty to get the desired instrument.

And of course, we are not only asking for one guitar from musicians to musician, also institutions, festivals of music, any organization related to culture or entertainment can contribute such a guitar.

In the camps, the Ministry of Culture of the RASD will organize workshops to train the youth in the guitar techniques. And having once acquired the basic knowledge of the Haul, the participants have the freedom towards their own tendency and where their inspiration leads them.

Each guitar will carry the name given by the contributor and/or the name of the guitar student. And in case of institutions their logo will lead to them.

Thus, if one day a Sahrawi guitarist conquers the stages of the world, you will know who made it possible.

UNA GUITARRA PARA EL SAHARA

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[www.nubenegra.com/laMusicaHaul.html](http://www.nubenegra.com/laMusicaHaul.html)

[www.nubenegra.com/GuitarrasParaElSahara.html](http://www.nubenegra.com/GuitarrasParaElSahara.html)

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