

Sia Tolno – My Life (2011)

Written by bluelover

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1. *Blamah Blamah* 3:52 2. *Odju Watcha (album version) (Album version)* 4:33 3. *Di ya leh* 4:15 4. *Malaya (My life)* 3:43 [play](#) 5. *Polli Polli* 4:30 6. *Aya ye* 3:33 [play](#) 7. *Ayiboh* 4:15 8. *Blind Samaritan (Poor Man)* 3:53 9. *Kongossa* 5:30 10. *Tonia (The Truth)* 5:13 11. *Toumah toumah* 4:38 12. *Shame upon u* 5:01

It took some time, but through a process of elimination and experience, Sia Tolno finally got what she was aiming for. In fact, the choice of title for her third album *My Life* no doubt shows that the singer feels she has finally served up a true image of herself.

Her 2009 album, *Eh Sanga*, was orchestrated by Manfila Kanté, who had been given the role of arranging her work. Not an easy task to follow your instincts and contradict a man viewed as a pillar of traditional Mandinka since the seventies. Pretty difficult, too, to fully accept the result, however remarkable.

Musically, with roots in the Kissi ethnic culture and ears more in tune with her Anglophone neighbours, she saw herself in a different place altogether. A few songs, like *Poe Ya Eh Yema Num*, showed her the way. “I’m a really rock person”, she confesses.

In the studio of Mory Kante, another star of the Guinean music scene, this time she worked with Mamadou Camara, a veteran guitarist from the Kaloum Star Band. Like her, he had spent some of his life in Sierra Leone and was better placed to understand the young woman. Sia also returned an invitation to “Master” Mamadou Barry, on whose album *Niyo* she had made an appearance in 2009. The saxophonist, a disciple of Momo Wandel, and the French player

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Nicolas Guéret, make their presence felt on the album, in particular on Ayiboh, and Polli Polli, which the singer describes as “a funky afro beat”.

Her use of Pidgin English and singing style inevitably draw the odd parallel with Fela. Elsewhere, a scent of southern Africa rises up, added to an undeniable strain of rumba on Blind samaritan, and reggae on Kongossa.

Often energetic and very polished, My Life is first and foremost a varied album, giving Sia Tolno a chance to fit into a range of different musical worlds, like back in the days when she used to play in the cabaret bars of Conakry. --- Bertrand Lavaine, rfimusic.com

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