

Awet N' Hafash! Victory to the Masses!

As we are nearing May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 twenty three years after the nation of ERITREA got it's independence our feelings of nationalism becomes stronger and we all go back to memory lane and appreciate the struggles that took place for this important victory of independence that happened on that (May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1991) Memorable day.

Last weekend after finding out the long awaited disc by Layne Tadesse has been released and can be purchased at the ECCC and online, I made it my business to go get one. I have always been fascinated by the sounds of Layne as his vocals have been and are a vital component of his touring band as well as his past albums. There are even times when he seemed like the re-incarnation of the legend Bob Marley himself.

Driving in the DC area the last couple of days with my speakers blurring to the sounds of "Awet N'Hafash" I have gotten many weird looks from on lookers and in some cases people asking who the artist is. In the evening hours with the cool breeze flowing through my window and a great sound jamming out of my car while I am sipping on my ice tea, has taken me back to the days when I was younger listening to the likes of Maxi Priest, Ziggy Marley and many other reggae artists that made the day go by faster.

This year I would like to write about a new CD associated with the Eritrean term "Awet N Hafash" translated to "Victory to the Masses". The album produced by none other than Layne Tadesse and his band 7 Seal Dub is one every ERITREAN should be proud of. It is soothing and well produced and combines some Eritrean lyrics mixed in with the English language. Its message is loud and clear and it encompasses the struggles of every day folk whether African or non-African with life's beauty struggles. I recommend it highly and during this incredible month for Eritreans, I suggest you jam to the sounds of Layne Tadesse and his incredible band known as 7 seal Dub.

Without getting into too many details I would like to point some of the highlights on this CD. Summarizing this album is quite straightforward. You can hear that time has been taken in making this quality album, not just in the production but also in the vocal content and deliverance.

First and foremost however I want to share my opinions of the genre of reggae. While it is a universal beat most commonly made popular by the legendary Bob Marley, its message sometimes praised the former emperor of a country that had been brutal to the Eritrean people. However that type of music has been popular in Africa for a long time and was not necessarily created by him or for him.

Reggae in Africa was much boosted by the visit of Bob Marley to Zimbabwe on Independence Day 18 April 1980. In West Africa reggae has been popular since the

1970's. In South Africa, reggae music has played a unifying role amongst cultural groups in Cape Town. During the years of Apartheid, the music bonded people from all demographic groups. So having said that Eritrea only 23 years old as a nation has also adopted the style in a unique way. There are songs that were created as early as the struggle years that had reggae beats. But a child of Eritrea living in the diaspora has taken it to a new level and he should be commended. The Album "Awet N'Hafash" is one that should hit charts all over the globe.

Starting of the album Layne's young daughter says it all "Awet N'Hafash" and the song "Struggling Hope" featuring Ladee Dread and J Ras" kicks it off with such a nice beat as well as words to long for mentioning marginalized people and their stories of a tough life. Then comes "Bless Me" written by Layne himself. The song gives you inner strength and can motivate you to become a better person if you appreciate the man upstairs. His hit song "Ghetto Corner" which also has been put on video is an international sensation in my opinion. We need to promote and market it as much as possible as it indicates clearly that the poor continue to become poorer in a very unfair society. Using the Ghetto as an example the song shows that life in the so called civilized nations is not what it is cut out to be, especially to those who are struggling day and night to make ends meet. Then comes the song "Inspiration" which adores any queen in a man's life. This song also has a great composition and it's message to a loved one is beyond words. The other song I would like mention is "Selam" translated to "Peace" featuring an Eritrean Minasie Haile who by the way has such a splendid voice. They sing about Peace in general. It starts of happy with a horn section and continues as the song becomes more addictive by the second switching words from tigrinia to English.

Last but not least the reason I wrote this peace is because the song "Awet N'Hafash" a slow but smooth sailing song that says so much about the people of Eritrea and how they gave up a lot for their independence. Uttering it as their last word while dying many ERITREAN Heroes have made it a popular statement and left their marks forever. Thank you Layne Tadesse and 7 Seal Dub for maintaing Eritrea's history through your music. Layne should also be proud of his daughter and family. His little one "Millena" utters those important words throughout the song "Awet N' Hafash" keeping us alert at all times that Eritrea's independence did not come in vain. It came through the blood, sweat and tears of our martyrs.

Layne Tadesse and people who put this compilation together should be credited for assembling these excellent and diverse reggae tracks. Today's reggae music is quite fragmented and there aren't a lot of great packages that assemble such a high quality of recordings as "Awet" N'Hafash" (Victory to the Masses). I would highly recommend this disc, you will not go wrong or be disappointed.

Happy Independence day to all ERITREANS!

Mike Seium