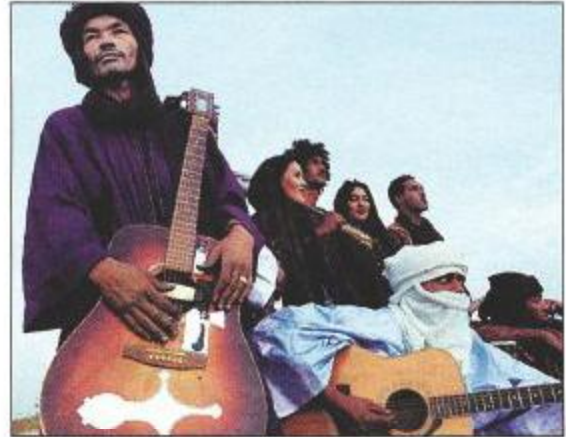


Rolling Stone's



**BEST
AFRICAN BAND**

Tinariwen

In 1964, Ibrahim Ag Alhabib's father was killed by the Malian army, reportedly for aiding rebels fighting against the government. Ibrahim, now forty-eight, fled for Algeria and started playing music as a way to bide his time until he was old enough to seek revenge. "I dreamed of avenging my father," Ibrahim says. "I found solace playing guitars I made from sticks and oil cans."

It took Ibrahim more than a decade to get a proper acoustic guitar in his poverty-stricken part of Africa. When he did, he formed Tinariwen, who have become famous for a fluid, riff-heavy style of desert rock that carries the torch for African bluesmen like Ali Farka Touré and speaks to the struggles of Ibrahim's long-exiled Tuareg tribesmen. (A settlement with the Malian government allowed the Tuareg tribes to return home in 1991.) "We've listened to lots of stuff - Arabic music, Rabah Driassa, Led Zeppelin," Ibrahim says. "Our music mixes all that together, like a desert stew."

The band will tour Europe this summer, and has attracted fans like Bono and Robert Plant. "I'm singing about my love for the desert," Ibrahim says. "I'm singing about our desire for peace and prosperity. That's it, really."

CHRISTIAN HOARD

GET THIS: Tinariwen's 2007 album, *Aman Iman*.