

# **Leo Mkanyia: Swahili Blues musician**

## **Dunia Hii (four-track EP)**

Recorded February 2010 in Dar es Salaam

### **Summary**

**Born:** 1981, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

**Experience:** professional musician for past 10 years, guitarist for 20 years

**Currently:** Solo musician, leads the Wao Band, guitar teacher

**Style:** Swahili Blues

Leo Mkanyia is a 28-year-old blues guitarist and songwriter from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, who was born into a family of musicians.

Leo has been playing music for 20 years. Inspired by his father, a well-known jazz musician in the famous Mlimani Park Orchestra, Leo spent years playing his father's guitar when he was alone in the house and copying the chords he'd seen him play. Music doesn't pay in Tanzania, and so his father was adamant his son should follow another career. When he found Leo playing a classic Tanzanian song one day, he decided to give his son his wish, and taught him all that he knew.

Today they play together; his father plays bass guitar on the four tracks, and lead guitar on two.

Leo began to play professionally at 18. He worked as a peer educator, singing songs on the street to educate people on HIV/AIDS, and in four local bands. Currently he plays at venues and events around Tanzania – solo and with the Wao Band. He worked previously as a French teacher; today he teaches private guitar lessons and is studying in order to study music overseas.

He is fluent in three languages – Swahili, French, and English. His vocals are in Swahili and French, but he prefers to sing in his mother tongue, Swahili. He is currently continuing his studies in the three languages.

**As a solo artist Leo has created his own modern style, which he calls *Swahili Blues***

### **Track listing**

#### **Dunia Hii (this world)**

Written by Leo Mkanyia

Leo Mkanyia – rhythm guitar, vocals

Said Karume – lead guitar

Henry Mkanyia – bass guitar

Thomas Longstaff – saxophone

#### **Bangili (bracelet)**

Written by Leo Mkanyia

Leo Mkanyia – rhythm guitar, vocals

Said Karume – lead guitar

Henry Mkanyia – bass guitar

#### **Mwanangu (my son)**

Written by Leo Mkanyia

Leo Mkanyia – rhythm guitar, vocals

Henry Mkanyia – bass guitar, lead guitar

#### **Isla (my darling Isla)**

Written by Leo Mkanyia

Leo Mkanyia – rhythm guitar, vocals

Henry Mkanyia – bass guitar, lead guitar

Thomas Longstaff – saxophone

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