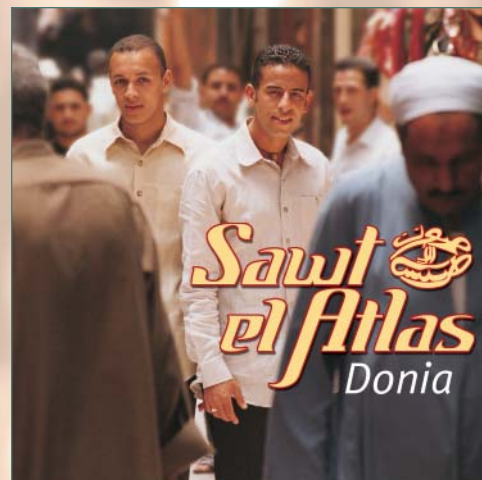


**Sawt el Atlas** is a 10 piece band that combines traditional Arabic music, with rai, reggae, funk and a hint of Latin rhythms. Fronted by the warm voices of Kamel and Mounir (of Moroccan descent), their music is powerfully driving and will sweep any audience off its feet. They have been touring Europe throughout the nineties – since the band members were just 12 years old!

**Donia** is Sawt el Atlas' first to be domestically released in the US. The album draws on the band's multicultural influences but retains a warm, earthy feel. It was recorded in both Paris and Cairo in order to preserve the authenticity and sound of the recording. The result is a perfect blend of Middle Eastern roots and modern groove. Sawt el Atlas rightly dedicate the record to "people who are short of exoticism and warmth"!



- 1 **Ne me jugez pas** *Don't judge me* (3.30)
- 2 **Ya Mira** *Oh Lady* (3.54)
- 3 **Donia** *Life* (3.37)
- 4 **Ness** *People feat. Natacha Atlas* (3.34)
- 5 **Le soleil de ma Vie** *The sunshine of my life* (4.07)
- 6 **L'Hagra** *Abandoned* (3.54)
- 7 **Andalucia** *Andalucia feat. Chico Cana* (4.24)
- 8 **Mama** *Mother* (4.22)
- 9 **Zmane y Dore** *The wheel turns* (4.57)
- 10 **Datna** *Our life led us* (3.45)
- 11 **Mouminine** *The faithful, the believer* (4.01)
- 12 **Ne me jugez pas** *Volodia mix* (3.38)

## 2001 Tour Schedule

- 7/11 - Kennedy Center / Millenium Stage - Washington DC
- 7/13 - UW / Madison - Madison - WI
- 7/13 - Rainbow Summer - Milwaukee - WI
- 7/14 - Hothouse - Chicago - IL
- 7/15 - Detroit Concert of Colors - Detroit - MI
- 7/16 - Walker Art Center - Minneapolis - MN
- 7/18 - Artown - Reno - NV
- 7/20 - Grand Performances - Los Angeles - CA
- 7/22 - Ashkenaz - Berkeley - CA
- 7/27 - Roots Festival - Victoria - BC
- 7/28 - WOMAD - Seattle - WA
- 7/29 - WOMAD - Seattle - WA
- 7/31 - Les Franofolies - Montreal - Canada
- 8/1 - Les Franofolies - Montreal - Canada
- 8/2 - Ross Institute - East Hampton - NY



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Mt. Eastern / Morocco  
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Sawt el Atlas

## Biography

Sawt el Atlas is Arabic for "Voice of the Atlas" (a mountain range in central Morocco). The band's music, however, is true to heart of Arabo-French community – characterized by the pulsating sounds of pop-raï, and equally enriched by reggae, funk, hip-hop, a hint of Latin rhythms, as well as a traditional Egyptian string orchestra. The result is a deliciously textured, powerful and driving mix, and will sweep an audience off its feet.

Sawt el Atlas is quite a family affair. At the core of the ten-member group are two sets of three brothers, from the Moroccan families El Habchi and Mirghani. The brothers met in the late 1980s in the French city of Blois and, fronted by the warm vocals of Kamel and Mounir, began to play together locally at weddings, Ramadan fests and the like (Kamel and Mounir were just 12 years old at the time!) The kids were listening to a musical mélange that in addition to French music included Khaled and Lofti Bouchnak, Kool and the Gang, and a lot of reggae – especially Bob Marley. At home, they heard traditional Moroccan music and the great voices of Arabic song – Oum Kalsoum and Farid el Atrache.

Soon after their formation – Sawt el Atlas began to tour, first in France and then all over Europe, opening for the likes of Khaled, Cheb Mami, Youssou N'Dour and Natacha Atlas, with whom they've since shared, aside from the collective namesake, several collaborations. In 1996 they released their first CD, Généraliser, and in 1999 they released their second recording – "Donia" – on Sony France's Small label. Donia is Sawt el Atlas' first domestic release for the US.

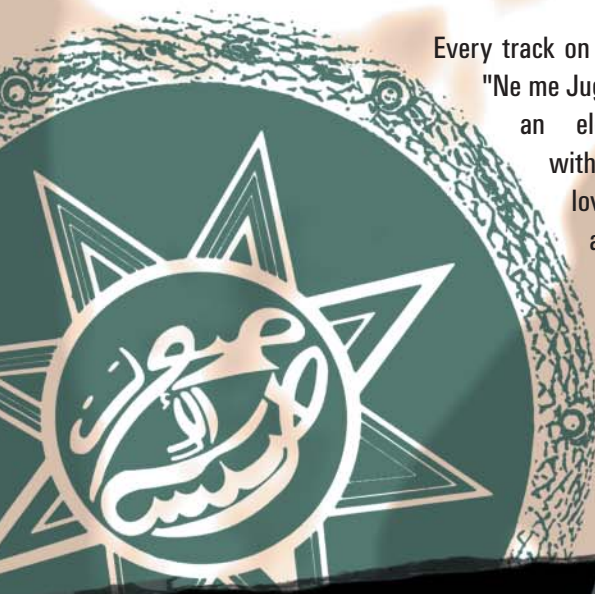
Wanting to capture both the popular sounds of Paris-based raï as well as the orchestral style and microtones of classical Arabic music, the band recorded the CD both in Paris and in Cairo. Going to Egypt to record was an incredibly moving experience. "Egypt is the capital of Oriental music," says Kamel. "All the classical Arabic singers made it there. It was such a great privilege and honor for us. The way they record there is so different – the power of unison, of quarter notes, and the musicianship... The vibe was great, the studio was Sawt el Hob ("Voice of Love") right near the pyramids..."

The music is set to lyrics in both Arabic and French, with love as the dominant theme – love for one's religion, one's parents, one's community one's lover, and love for people in general. Longtime friend of the band Natacha Atlas guests on a scorching drum n' bass duet with the band on the track "Ness" (the people), and flamenco singer Chico Ocaña is featured on the uplifting rumba-raï track "Andalucía", dedicated to the eight centuries of shared history between Spain and the Arab world.

Every track on the record has a different combination of ingredients that spice up the musical tagine.

"Ne me Jugez Pas", the opening track, is driven by a pulsating raï beat, sweeping Arabic strings and an elegant pop mix which took it to the charts as the hit single in France. "Ya Mra" is colored with a funk horn section and brass riffs woven into the mix. "Donia", the title track, is a smooth lovers'-raï. A review in Straight No Chaser characterized "Mouminine", the closing track, as a "whirling derviche of an orgasmic end of evening tune" and the album as a "slamming party record from the burning heart of the French North African Community."

Sawt El Atlas view the record as a voyage between Morocco, Egypt, and France, with influences coming from the United States, Jamaica and Cuba. But mainly, their music is about warmth, about dancing, about moving and being moved. And they dedicate the album to "people who are short of exoticism and warmth!"



# Sawt el Atlas