

# Waayaha Cusub to Stage Peace Festival

Somali hip-hop collective return from exile in Kenya to perform in war-torn homeland

**M**OGADISHU, A CITY IN which extremists banned music and threatened and attacked musicians for almost six years, is set to stage the Somali Reconciliation Festival in mid-March and play host to Somalia's leading hip-hop acts.

The festival is the brainchild of the influential Somali hip-hop crew Waayaha Cusub, led by rapper Shiine Akhyaar Ali. It will be the first major concert in the city since civil war broke out two decades ago. The Somali government, backed by African Union forces, liberated Mogadishu from Al Qaeda-backed Al Shabaab rebels last year. Though the city remains on edge, the festival's organizers – in collaboration with the government – want to act fast to build on the optimism that the war is coming to an end.

"The best way for us to save youth from extremism and end this war," says Ali, "is to bring them together at these concerts."

Somali performers ranging from vocalist Falis Abdi to rapper Digriyo Abdi will headline the main stage. Other performers already confirmed for the festival include survivors of Mogadishu's Motown-style group Waaberi, rappers Lihle Muhdin and Burhan Ahmed Yare, Afro-fusion artists Kombo Chokwe and Afro Simba from Kenya, Australian electro rockers Ring of Steel, and American psy-



**LOCAL HEROES**  
Digriyo Abdi performs with Waayaha Cusub in Nairobi, Kenya

chedelic-rock group Mostar '96. The organizers say further artists will be announced. The festival will be a "stealth" event, with exact times and location of performances released only hours ahead for security reasons. Performances will be filmed for a documentary, *Live from Mogadishu*, set to be released later this year, and some shows will be streamed live online.

Waayaha Cusub, a supergroup of Somali refugee rappers and singers based in Nairobi, Kenya, have been building toward this festival for more than eight years. Through their albums, videos and shows they are helping to shape a new genre of Somali music inspired by everything from African Horn pop stars Waaberi to global icons like 2Pac, Jay-Z, and Beyoncé. In December, fans rallied dur-

ing a string of terror bombings to pack a small hotel in Eastleigh, Nairobi, for seven of the group's Stop The Violence events. Songs ranging from "Dhibataada Waa" [Leave the Violence Behind] to "Gacalisaydayda" [My Baby, Let's Work Together] have become anthems for the region's growing anti-war movement, promoting peace and reconciliation while criticizing extremist rebels as well as any fighting groups who kill civilians. Their success has come at a cost: Ali survived an assassination attempt in 2008 and continues to receive threats against his group.

"This country is for all of us," Ali tells *ROLLING STONE*. "It's time for people to have peace and leave this violence and extremist ideology behind. And for that, music is our way."

DANIEL J. GERSTLE

## 'COMMUNITY' RETURNS WITHOUT ITS MASTERMIND

The unlikely second life of NBC's hilariously unhinged sitcom – and the dudes who made it happen

For fans of *Community*, it's been one dark timeline. The most brilliantly warped comedy of our era has never racked up ratings, despite its hardcore following. Dan Harmon, the show's madman auteur, got the axe in May. NBC scheduled the new season for October, then put it on hiatus. And, oh, yeah – Chevy Chase quit. But at long last, *Community* returns on February 7th, with two new show-

runners in charge. It's easily the most high-profile showrunner switch in TV history – if only because until a few years ago, nobody outside Hollywood knew what a showrunner was. The new guys, Moses Port and David Guarascio, are college buddies who have been working together since they got their start on *Mad About You*. "We just shot a pilot called *El Jefe* that didn't get picked up," Port says. "And

then the day after that, they ask you if you want to run *Community*. It's strange."

The new season promises twists: Malcolm McDowell as the new history professor, James Brolin as Jeff's long-lost father, new romance between Troy and Britta. "And we're bullish on a Season Five," says Guarascio. "They have *The Office* and *30 Rock* going away, and hopefully that alone will play to our advantage."

ROB SHEFFIELD



*Community* goes back to school