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## **Johnny La Marama Il Purgatorio**

**Kalle Kalima (FIN):** guitar  
**Chris Dahlgren (USA):** bass  
**Eric Schaefer (G):** drums

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### **Johnny La Marama - Il Purgatorio**

Who the hell is Johnny La Marama, everyone asked when the band of the same name released their debut album in 2006. Now they're asking: Where the hell is he?

Where does the fiend possibly go? Exactly! To hell. Or at least to purgatory. So after "Fire!" and "Bicycle Revolution" it makes perfect sense that Kalle Kalima, Chris Dahlgren and Eric Schaefer now send their fictive desperado to "Il Purgatorio".

There sins get swept out of the souls with a hot broom in roman-catholic theology. But originally it was supposed to be a place of rest before going to heaven. Probably Johnny La Marama also thought that purgatory was some sort of illuminated lounge bar, where he starts off with a relaxed drink before continuing the search for his buddy Hans Hansson, and afterwards ascends to a heavenly manna feast.

But he had made a hell of a mistake!

Dante described purgatory in the Devine Comedy. Throughout seven terraces delinquents expiate towards salvation. Kalle Kalima, Chris Dahlgren and Eric Schaefer have extended Marama's purgatory-journey by a few breathers, historical figures and contemporary contents to eleven songs. And since we rarely see anyone from that region again, here's the Johnny-La-Marama-travel-guide through purgatory:

To begin with, the ancient poet Virgil teams with the protagonist and supports him with his leadership. "Step up the Tower" establishes at the foot of Monte Purgatorio that it will be an exhausting ascent. On the first terrace, the Terrace of the Proud, the two have to hack themselves a bluesy way through representatives of the dark side of the modern

internet-world in “Cyber Crusade”.

After a short recreational break in Ponderosa-freestyle (“Happy Song”) with western-soundtrack like music in pleasant memories, they meet someone who is miserable. He calls himself Dante, and he got stuck on the second terrace on his purgatory excursion. It is burning hot and lonely there. Guitarist Kalle Kalima gave this station the atmosphere of a long abandoned western town rotting away in its own depression.

Another “old acquaintance” is encountered on the third terrace. “Carlo Gesualdo” murdered his wife and her lover in 1590. Thereafter, depressed and close to derangement, he wrote music, which was centuries ahead of his time. A short dramaturgical leap leads to the sixth, bitter cold level. Even if you experience the banking world as a febrile memorial of present-day insanity in “Cash Flow”; covetousness is a truly timeless place forever with new content. After a small “Intermezzo”, a session with imaginary musician buddies and even more drinks (which is why the song, with over 11 minutes, is the longest on the album), La Marama and Virgil go back. Gesualdo’s ex, “Maria D’Alvos”, is just slowly dragging herself towards the covetous (5th terrace) to meet her lover “Fabrizio Carafa” – defying all of our hero’s warnings.

The seventh terrace of the lustful would be quite in tune with La Marama’s fancy with its pretty women and the cool music in “Devil Dance” (reminiscent of Strauss’ Salome and 60s lava lamps), but Virgil pushes them on. Eventually, at the summit of Mount Purgatory they finally meet the Hans Hansson they’ve been seeking, who is in a transcendental (in the bands terminus: “trans-in-dental”) levitation, whose weightlessness is facilitated by angelic beauties in “Laying Hands on Hans Hansson” in a “Sentimental Journey”-persiflage.

Once you’ve folded back your amazed ears after listening to Il Purgatorio, you only wonder why this magical triad from Berlin didn’t encounter any other whimsical characters on their purgatory-journey; such as Frank Zappa, Charles Mingus, Karlheinz Stockhausen, bad country music, legendary rock guitarists and a horde of punk bands.

In Johnny’s Hell’s Precipice the listener really gets roasted, the Berliner “Purgatorio” sometimes sounds as if a steel press with a hard drive error is running on autopilot. It rocks and bangs, sighs and grooves in all pitches and meters. The stairs to blessedness are crooked, full of odd meters, rhythmic ricochets and stumbling blocks. Above all though, Il Purgatorio is an expressive, epic movie soundtrack, very American in demeanor and in “song”. Somehow one constantly imagines oneself in Tarantino’s Titty Twister-bar from his picture From Dusk till Dawn. The usual parameters are not relevant here. Or were just devoured.

Johnny La Marama of course has mucho guitar. Kalle Kalima’s specialty thereon is the constructive deconstruction, honestly ironizing dishonest clichés. Or was it the other way around? The Finish guitarist can confidently be called the Euro-Marc Ribot, likewise versatile and multilayered in his playing. But also Eric Schaefer’s studies in New Music and a certain art-rock background step into the foreground. Chris Dahlgren finally “disguises” his prolific career in the New Music-jazz scene with his groovy backing. In any case, also the third Johnny-La-Marama-Coup makes it clear that its musical doubles get along blindly and very well; a real team, in which everyone interacts from their high levels on the same level with the others. In that way one can confidently go through hell. Even when “The Three from the Punk-Filling Station” with pumps of rock, grunge, jazz and improvisation with a high octane rating go straight to (music-) heaven with this purgatory ride.