



KARIM SIDIBÉ

Today's customers prefer the round huts of a Malian village to a backdrop of New York or Paris

showed groups of friends or family in their finery. Sidibé's portraits of young Malians doing the twist, for example, cast a rare light on West Africa and catapulted Sidibé to international fame.

Malick Sidibé is now largely retired while his son goes out to weddings and baptisms, much as his father once did. But Karim has a problem his father did not. "Analogue has gone out of fashion and digital has come in with force," says Karim, who has adopted digital reluctantly, for the sake of the business. "We take his shot and then I can show it automatically on the screen. That's what makes young people happy now."

Digital also costs less – 1,000 CFA francs (\$2) for a photo compared to up to 35,000 CFA francs for a black-and-white analogue portrait.

Karim has added his own twist. In the past, subjects wanted to pose in front of a backdrop of buildings in Paris or New York. "But I had my own idea. I went to the village and brought the backdrop back with me." Karim opens an envelope and gets out a digital print of a young man in a smart shirt and trousers that he has superimposed onto a village scene of round mud huts.

"When you see the round huts, you think, 'Ah, I am at home, it's been so many years that I haven't seen that.' It makes them so happy," says Karim, who sees that urban Malians feel increasingly disconnected from their roots. "It helps them not to miss their village so much." ●

Rose Skelton in Bamako

Photography The next generation of studio Sidibé

Keeping pace with new technology has not removed the magic from the well-known Bamako photography studio

The black-and-white curtain – which became the backdrop to some of the most iconic photos to have emerged from Africa in the 20th century – is still draped across the same studio wall on a corner street in central Bamako.

"Watch out!" calls Karim, son of legendary Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, holding up his hand to grab the

attention of the subject whilst peering through the lens of his father's Hasselblad camera. Snap, a single image is captured. "I don't want to miss a shot," says Karim, "every image counts."

Malick Sidibé was one of a handful of Malian photographers who set up studios around the time of independence from France. He photographed young Malians enjoying dance parties and

► MUSIC FESTIVAL DESERT SOUNDS GO INTO EXILE

There are many musical victims of Mali's political turmoil, and the country's much-feted *Festival au Desert* – risked being another one. Its organisers decided that the 2013 edition will take the form of a musical caravan travelling across the Sahel and on to Europe, the US and Southeast Asia.

The Festival in Exile will begin in Kobeni, Mauritania, 15km from the Malian border. It will travel into the southern Malian town of Ségou, then on to Bamako and finally Oursi in northeast Burkina Faso for three days on 20-22 February. A second caravan will leave Tamanrasset in Algeria, travel through

Niger and meet up with the musicians in Oursi. Manny Ansar, the festival's tireless organiser, told civil society group Freemuse that continuing with the festival "was my way of fighting back and showing that you can't kill music just because Timbuktu has been occupied". ●

R.S.
festival-au-desert.org



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