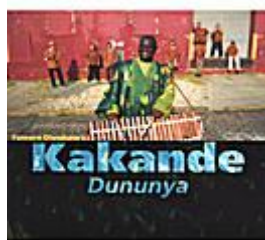


Mp3 Kakande - Dununya



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The balafon (xylophone) has electrified popular music in West Africa since the court of Emperor Sundiata Keita back in 1235. Lush vocals, flutes, sinewy guitars, cellos and countless textures. 11 MP3 Songs

WORLD: African- West, WORLD: Afro-Beat Show all album songs: Dununya Songs Details: Here is a review written by Banning Eyre for afropop.org Published Feb. 2008 at afropop.org/explore/album_review/ID/3433/

New York City is home to a rich community of splendid musicians from West Africa's old Mande Empire: Mali, Guinea, Gambia and beyond. Griot vocalist and balafon player extraordinaire, Famoro Dioubate is the latest star talent to emerge from the New York Mande milieu. The balafon (wooden xylophone) goes back to the touchstone period of Mande history, the rise of Sunjata Keita in 1235. The instrument seized from Sunjata's Susu nemesis went on to acquire iconic status. To this day in Famoso's native Guinea, Mande balafon features prominently in traditional and modern music alike. That history also weaves through the eleven tracks on this CD, even as Famoro intersperses memories of his childhood village (Kakande) and praise for old friends (Bouba Sylla) and new (Nina Kaba a young girl in Michigan). So while the music here takes liberties in keeping with the band's international makeup, the underlying music and themes are classic griot fare: an intertwining of the past and the present with an eye to charting the good road in life. Kakande takes a unique approach to Mande music: acoustic, kinetic, textured and grooving. Dioubate's virtuosic balafon riffing is rightly front and center, backed harmonically by a sweet blend of electric guitar (Mamady Kouyate), cello (Raoul Rothblatt), flute (Sylvain Leroux) and sax (Avram Fefer). These players step out occasionally, but mostly hang with the crisp rhythm section, creating textures that work as well in a dark, roiling jam like Paya Paya, as on a slow, mellifluous praise song like Mariama Traor. Kakande bassist Peter Fanda, a veteran of numerous Mande music projects, produced the album, skillfully balancing these elements to create a

unified sound that keeps Famoro in the spotlight. Dununya opens with cello and flute then kicks into a majestic balafon canter over which Dioubate sings opposite a male-female chorus. The piece ends with just those voices, singing largely in 4ths more cool jazz than strident griot backing vocal and fading, finger style acoustic guitar. This sort of organic arranging sets Kakandes work apart from conventional griot pop. Famoros balafon work is a reliable treat. Hes overdubbed additional parts on a number of these tracks to create thick, gnarly grooves of pure rhythm and melody. The final piece, Temedi Kote, a balafon instrumental, is a tour de force in this regard. Famoros singing is spirited cool and plaintive on Bani, August, if a tad strained, on the modal, jazz-tinged So Si Sa. The fact is, Famoro cant match the spectacular voices of Guineas top singers like Sekou Bambino Diabate or Mory Kanté but as it turns out, Kanté is a friend and admirer, and he will accompany Kakandes CD release tour as a special guest (See dates below). The real vocal fireworks on Dununya come from Missia Saran Dioubate, a bona fide griot diva who has also spent considerable time in New York in recent years. Whether topping vocal choruses, or stepping out solo in praise of African leaders on Souaresi, or of Famoros New York mother on Mariama Traor Missia has the sort of thrilling delivery that instantly communicates why griot singers wield such emotional power among the Mande. What comes through most on Dununya is the freshness and esprit de corps of this band. Kakande performed plenty before going into the studio, so the arrangements feel organic and natural. This cross-cultural collaboration sets a new bar for the New York Mande scene, and speaks well for the ever rising sophistication and quality of U.S. based Afropop projects in general.

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