

OCTOBER 2009

REVIEWS ALBUMS



Fula complement:
Bassekou Kouyate
(second left) and pals

BASSEKOU KOUYATE & NGONI BA I Speak Fula

OUTHERE

★★★★★

Second album from rising Malian star

After years accompanying the likes of Ali Farka Touré, Kouyate emerged in '07 with a brilliant debut that for the first time turned his instrument the ngoni (a funky African banjo, approximately) into a frontline instrument. It's a brilliantly versatile and expressive tool, equally capable of shimmering tenderness ("Tineni") and the edgy attack of lead guitar ("Ladon"). Elsewhere, guest appearances from Vieux Farka Touré (guitar) and Toumani Diabaté (kora) create a mesmerising backdrop of strings over which Kouyate's wife, Amy Sacko, adds vocals. Up there with Tinariwen's *Imidiwan* as a contender for African album of the year.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON