

Bassekou Kouyate
& Ngoni Ba

I Speak Fula

NEXT AMBIENCE/SUB POP

Africa reclaims crown as the original shredders

Mali's Bassekou Kouyate is a blend of griot and guitar hero, strapping on his lean, banjo-like *ngoni* like a rock god; running the traditional lute through a wah-wah pedal; and imbuing everything he touches with fleet-fingered, headbangingly percussive solos. *I Speak Fula* effortlessly mixes the rapid-fire pluck of bluegrass, the doleful churn of the blues, the joyous pulse of Afropop, and (in a makeover from his gentler 2007 debut) the caffeinated whirl of high-velocity rock. Think his old boss Ali Farka Touré, if he were prone to Van Halen-style eruptions. **CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN**

