

Mamadou Barry – Niyo (2009)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 21 June 2010 17:31 - Last Updated Sunday, 25 January 2015 17:32

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01. Niyo 06:49

02. Sodja 04:32

03. Africa Five 05:48

04. Tala 06:03

05. Sumbouya 05:57

06. Sedy 03:06

07. Barry Swing 07:00

08. Bike Magnin 06:59

09. Nene 08:30

Mamadou Barry (flute, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone) Missia Saran, Sia Tolno (chant) Mamadou Camara (guitar) Papa Kouyate (djembe)

Mamadou Barry belongs to a generation of musicians who grew up in a country where culture was wielded as a political instrument in post-independence days. Music played a significant role in forging national pride and the Guinean government financed the setting up of a national label, Syliphone, to record the growing band of national and federal orchestras. Interestingly enough, musicians were also financed by the state in those days, drawing regular salaries like other civil servants.

"Maître" Barry - so called because of his short career as a school teacher - began conducting Kaloum Star (a federal orchestra from Conakry) in 1969. The orchestra recorded a first LP in 1973 which was followed by a number of singles. Kaloum Star, who eventually released their official debut CD album in 1996, put themselves on the music map by modernising Mandingo folk sounds and opening traditional music up to jazz and Afro-beat.

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Niyo taps into much the same vein, the sleeve notes proclaiming that Mamadou Barry's debut album is "to be filed under: Africa / cool grooves." Barry, considered by many as a worthy heir to Momo Wandel (a saxophonist whose vibrant swing style made a legendary impact on the Guinean music scene) also makes a point of bringing jazz home to Africa on his solo debut.

On the vibrant Africa Five, "Master" Barry puts his own definitive spin on Take Five (a classic jazz piece originally recorded by the American pianist Dave Brubeck and his quartet half a century ago now.) Then his sax slips into a different mode on Sumbouya, accompanying the raw, emotional vocals of the young Guinean songstress Sia Tolno. Two of Guinea's finest female voices - Sény Malomou and Missia Saran - step behind the microphone on Sodia and Bikè Magnin while the kora-player Kélontan Cissoko steps centre stage on the final track, Néné, to sing "Maître" Barry's praises griot-style. With its clever alternation of songs and instrumental tracks, Niyo strikes a thoroughly seductive balance. ---Bertrand Lavaine, rfimusic.com

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