

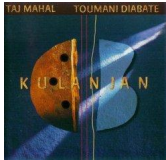
## Taj Mahal – Kulanjan (1999)

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*01. Queen Bee 02. Tunkaranke 03. Ol' Georgie Buck 04. Kulanjan 05. Fanta 06. Guede Man Na 07. Catfish Blues 08. K'an Ben 09. Take This Hammer 10. Atlanta Kaira 11. Mississippi-Mali Blues* Personnel: Taj "Dadi Kouyate" Mahal (vocals, guitar, piano); Kassemady Diabate, Ramatou Diakite (vocals); Banning (guitar); Ugouye Koulibaly (kamalengoni); Toumani Diabate, Ballake Sissoko (kora); Bassekou Kouyate (ngoni, bass); Lasana Diabate (Mande balafon).

This informal collaboration between veteran American bluesman Mahal and Malian kora (it's a 21-stringed lute-like instrument) master Diabate was recorded in an Athens, GA, studio with a sextet of West African string instrumentalists and vocalists. It sounds like a half a world away, with the two mixed cultures merging to create traditional blues based on non-traditional musical values. Mahal's gruff, weary voice is soothed by the Malian crew's sweet tones; conversely, the leaders' picking styles sound as if they were harvested from the same land. Natural, unpretentious, and occasionally sensual, Kulanjan is classy world music without the stuffy undertones. ---Michael Gallucci, Rovi

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