

## Putumayo Presents – Acoustic Africa (2006)

Written by bluelover

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1. *Sore* - Diogal
2. *Mindjer Doce Mel* - Eneida Marta
3. *Misahotaka Ny Akama* - Rajery
4. *Sedjedo* - Angelique Kidjo [play](#)
5. *Vusi Mahlasela* - Basimanyana [play](#)
6. *Bana* - Faya Tess & Lokua Kanza
7. *Mauritania* - Lay Sow
8. *Tradicao* - Gabriela Mendes
9. *Baro* - Habib Koite
10. *Palea* - Dobet Gnahore
11. *Antonia* - Manecas Costa
12. *Fanta Bourama* - Djelimady Tounkara

«While the market for African music is heavy with new forms of Afro-pop, synth-driven reggae, and piles of high-energy soukous, there is a movement afoot for music in the more restrained end of the spectrum. Acoustic Africa takes a stab at compiling some of the newer sounds of this movement, à la MTV Unplugged. There are a few names on the album with massive recognition value: Angélique Kidjo presents a song to be released on a future album of her own, Habib Koité has his old hit "Baro," and Djelimady Tounkara (from the Super Rail Band, among others) contributes a recent piece for the guitar. Moving away from West Africa, South Africa's old master Vusi Mahlasela contributes a nice work for the guitar as well. Aside from these better-known artists, though, the real joy of this album comes from the unheard of, or at least less heard of. Senegal's Diogal has a gentle touch on the guitar, as does Madagascar's Rajery on the valiha (with a mangled hand and a technical style similar to Django Reinhardt's old playing technique). While Lokua Kanza has had a bit of fame outside of the Congo, Faya Tess is somewhat less known outside of Africa – on this album they combine for an uncharacteristically (for her, at least) somber piece. Laye Sow's gentle approach to protest music and a pair of works from the Cape Verdean repertoire fill out a relatively diverse set quite

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well. While North and East Africa, and indeed most of the central and southern portions, are underrepresented, the album covers the acoustic movement well, and touches upon the acoustic tips of more electronically based styles as well. The music is top-notch without exception, and the performers make a nice grab bag of exploration for the intrepid listener.» (AMG)

This flowingly well-sequenced collection of semi-acoustic tracks, some of which have a smoothly mainstream FM-radio feeling while others are more roots-oriented, is just the thing to unwind after a stressful workday or get the weekend off to an effervescent yet relaxed start. South African troubadour Vusi Mahlasela and Senegalese pop icon Diogal are heard to great effect, as are Congolese stars Faya Tess and Lokua Kanza, entwined in a lusciously Cuban-rumba-influenced duet. A lesser-known Cape Verdean songstress named Gabriela Mendes swings her way through a typically dance-like ditty and Dobet Gnahoré of Ivory Coast makes a similarly strong impression. A previously unreleased tune by Angelique Kidjo of Benin rounds the set out; every compilation should ideally offer something new, not just retreads, so this is definitely a good thing. Another important selling point: a portion of the proceeds from this album will be donated to Mercy Corps in support of their efforts to help victims of AIDS and the civil war in Darfur, and to Oxfam America and Oxfam Novib's "Make Trade Fair." --*Christina Roden*

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