

## Angelique Kidjo - Oyaya! (2004)

Written by bluelover

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01. *Le monde comme un bebe (duo avec Henri Salvador)* 02. *Adje Dada* 03. *Bala Bala (La fois qu'y fallait pas)* 04. *Oulala* 05. *Congoleo* 06. *Mister Love* 07. *Mutoto Kwanza* 08. *Seyin Djro* 09. *Dje Dje L'Aye* 10. *Conga Habanera* 11. *Macumba* 12. *Djovamin Yi* 13. *Bissimilai* 14. *Bala Bala (version Africaine)* [Bonus track] Personnel: Angélique Kidjo (vocals); Jacob Desvarieux (vocals, guitar); Henri Salvador (vocals); Hervér Bault (guitar, cavaquinho); Mamadou Diabate (kora); Anne Sophie Courderot, Florent Carriere (strings); Steve Berlin, Luis-Eric Gonzalez (baritone saxophone); Luis Eric González (trumpet); Alberto Salas (piano, keyboards); Abou Sylla (balafon); Vincent Artaud (upright bass); Rene Camacho (bass guitar); Julien Chirol (claves); Andy Narrell (steel pan); Ramón Stagnaro (guitar, tres); Dominic Kanza (guitar); Justo Almario (alto saxophone, tenor saxophone); Francisco Torres (trombone); Walter Rodriguez (drums, percussion); Michito Sánchez (percussion); Ames Felix, Tata Vega (background vocals).

With her sophomore Sony release comes a theme with a broader international appeal from this gutsy and powerful West African (Beninoise) vocalist/songwriter. Those expecting an African-roots approach might be slightly disappointed as the sheer strength of the overall sound quality and musicianship renders 'l'authenticite' obsessives somewhat redundant in this instance.

The mostly latino session players are highly adept at turning their hand to virtually any style here on Oyaya. "Seyin Djuro" is an afro-salsa in the style of Ricardo Lemvo, whilst "Congoleo", the song picked for single release, is a joyful guitar-led porro with a Colombian 'costeno' feel. "Bala Bala" is a Cesaria Evoria-ish bolero-son whilst "Oulala" is a pan-Caribbean wake-up call in the Juan Luis Guerra mould, with even a touch of steel-pan (a real one, thank goodness, not the all-too-common synthesiser version).

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"Congo Habanera" is solid Miami-style latino pop (I thought of Gloria Estefan in her Mi Tierra period). "Adja Dada" is an old-school mambo (i.e. slowish tempo) and "Djovamin Yi" takes us back to the afro-salsa style of the opener. Angelique's home-from-home - Paris - shines out strong on a sexy zouk-love tune "Dje Dje L'Aye". "Macumba", belying the Afro-Brazilian promise in its title, comes over as funky, modern Cuban piece.

The only nod to Benin tradition is in the closing "Bissimilai", a folkloric female-choir song.

Angelique Kidjo has always been too strong a personality to corral in the dusty 'traditional world music' racks or - just as limiting - a series of 4/4 club-remix plodders. A big thumbs-up to her producers Steve Berlin and Alberto Salas, then, for such a radical and successful repositioning of her larger-than-life style and talent. --- John Armstrong, BBC Review

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