

# Fatoumata Diawara: Fenfo review – a seductive marriage of ancient and modern

By Kitty Empire  
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Pierced of lip, electric guitarist Fatoumata Diawara has verve to spare, and a dynamic voice whose partial cloudiness is fundamental to its appeal. The singer released her debut album, *Fatou*, in 2011; an intervening aeon has seen the Mali-born, Paris-based artist act in films and collaborate extensively; Ultimatum, her Disclosure feature, was released earlier this month. In the wake of the discovery last year of slave markets in Libya, she recorded a powerful anti-racism track, Dionya.

*Fenfo* (“Something to Say” in Bambara) finds Diawara engaged on an outreach programme, making contemporary roots music about themes that range from the specifically African – Kanou Dan Yen lambasts the tradition that stops different ethnic groups intermarrying – to the universal. Don Do, the album closer, finds Diawara aching about unrequited love to a sparse accompaniment: her electric guitar and Vincent Ségal’s cello. *Fenfo*’s most seductive marriages of ancient and modern have already come out: Nterini, the lead track, and the mesmeric Kokoro.

Nonetheless, the depths of the tracklisting are a surprise. Ridiculously easy on the ear, Bonya (Respect) spikes 60s US R&B with kora runs courtesy of both Toumani and Sidiki Diabaté, while Dibi Bo comes to Anglophone ears as finger-clicking doo-wop that also invites you to sing along; exercise caution, however, on Negue Negue.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/jun/03/fatoumata-diawara-fenfo-review-a-seductive-marriage-of-ancient-and-modern>