[< Mali's Oumou Sangaré Keeps Speaking Out On 'Mogoya'](https://www.npr.org/2017/06/22/533944616/malis-oumou-sangar-keeps-speaking-out-on-mogoya)

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AUDIE CORNISH, HOST:

Oumou Sangare is one of the most celebrated singers in Mali. She has a new album out called "Mogoya," or "Today's People." It's her first new work in eight years. Reviewer Banning Eyre says it charts a new course for this renowned West African singer.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "BENA BENA")

OUMOU SANGARE: (Singing in foreign language).

BANNING EYRE, BYLINE: Oumou Sangare began her career as an outspoken champion for the rights of women. Her 1989 debut offered sharp critiques of practices such as arranged marriages and polygamy, much of this drawn from her personal experiences growing up in a polygamist household. Sangare's songs had the power to disarm critics and make defenders of outmoded traditions think twice. But they would never have had such impact were it not for her irresistible songbird voice.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "BENA BENA")

SANGARE: (Singing in foreign language).

EYRE: Sangare is an icon of Mali and Wassoulou music. Wassoulou is the name of a region in the country's forested south, but Sangare and others redefined it as a music style.

(SOUNDBITE OF OUMOU SANGARE SONG, "DJOUKOUROU")

EYRE: On "Mogoya," she takes new liberties with that style. She worked with young producers in Sweden and France to create a more contemporary sound, rejuvenating her art and aiming her pointed messages at a younger audience.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "DJOUKOUROU")

SANGARE: (Singing in foreign language).

EYRE: Within these brisk, sonically rich songs, Sangare addresses a lot - Malians who lose hope in their country and risk their lives trying to reach Europe by sea, the danger of gossip and rumors, the breakdown of trust between people in the wake of Mali's recent political crises. In the song "Yere Faga," Sangare takes on the sensitive subject of suicide.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "YERE FAGA")

UNIDENTIFIED SINGERS: (Singing in foreign language).

EYRE: And the track is notable for the inclusion of legendary Nigerian Afrobeat drummer Tony Allen.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "YERE FAGA")

SANGARE: (Singing in foreign language).

EYRE: "Mogoya" is only Sangare's fifth studio album in some 30 years. That's partly because she owns a hotel in Mali and runs other businesses. She's not locked into the normal rigors of a pop music career. Sangare makes a new album only when she's good and ready, and once again, it shows in the work. Mali punches far above its weight in producing great and innovative music, but "Mogoya" is a landmark, maybe the best album I've heard all year.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "FADJAMOU")

UNIDENTIFIED SINGERS: (Singing in foreign language).

SANGARE: (Singing in foreign language).

CORNISH: Banning Eyre is a senior producer for Afropop Worldwide. He reviewed "Mogoya" by Oumou Sangare.

(SOUNDBITE OF SONG, "FADJAMOU")

UNIDENTIFIED SINGERS: (Singing in foreign language).