

## Moving Time

Post-Katrina New Orleans has seen a consistent flux of musicians—some leaving for a fresh start, but some are moving here to make New Orleans their homes. While we've seen Henry Butler, Endre Landsnes and Clint Maedgen move away, we have also seen Mike Dillon and the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz relocate here. One of the most recent players to call New Orleans home is Seguenon Kone of the Ivory Coast. Although one emigrant cannot change the face of New Orleans music, Kone's presence and expertise in African percussion will help reemphasize the African in New Orleans music.

Kone grew up in Gbon, a northern city in the Ivory Coast, the son of a xylophone player. At an early age, Kone learned to play the balafon, djembe, djun djun, shekere and more, and by the age of 12, he was part of the Ivory Coast National Ballet. He knew at that point that entertaining anywhere in the world was what he wanted to do, noting, "When I see people happy and dancing, I know I'm communicating." As part of the National Ballet, he toured the world, practicing and performing all these skills day in and day out, sometimes up to 24 hours at a time. Kone honed his skills on 12 instruments, choreography, vocals and dance, as well as stilt walking and fire eating. He made a name for himself in African entertainment which allowed him to start his own ballet company in 1988, Ivory Coast Spectacle, and tour independently.

Eleven years after his initial performance in the United States, Kone played his first New Orleans shows in April, 2008. The feedback was so positive from musicians and audiences alike that he decided to move here. "I want to play with other people," he says. "I like that; it makes it fun," says Kone.

Playing in a city with a strong, eclectic musical background certainly helped inspire the move, but his student and friend Jeff Klein encouraged him and booked a series of shows to introduce him to New Orleans.

Kone's debut album, *Seguenon Afro Beat*, displays his strong command in a variety of percussion instruments—many new to the average ear—and his uplifting style. The



PHOTO: ELSA HAHNE

Seguenon Kone

call-and-response vocals over the hypnotic percussion patterns both lull and animate the body.

Martin Krusche, a member of New Orleans Afrobeat band Gov't Majik and leader of the Magnetic Ear is himself an emigrant from Munich, Germany, and he understands the positive effect a move like Kone's can have. Kone is not the only musician in New Orleans playing Afrobeat, but Krusche thinks "Seguenon will bring the Africans in New Orleans out, and he will bring Africans to town, to a point of almost crystallizing the African population in New Orleans."

"It's a thrill to have a direct, unadulterated, African musical experience" at our disposal, Krusche says, and the music of New Orleans meshes very well with Kone's style. "We just have to find the melodic context of his work," Krusche says. Judging by his live shows so far, that context has been found.

—Zach Custer