



Everything New Orleans

## Seguenon Kone's African jazz invasion at Jazz Fest

By Keith Spera, The Times-Picayune

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Ivory Coast native **Seguenon Kone** arrived in New Orleans approximately 250 years after African influences first began to shape the city's culture. But he's caught up, quickly ingratiating himself since moving here a year ago.

At Jazz Fest's WWOZ Jazz Tent on Saturday, Kone and two other African percussionists fronted a band of native and naturalized New Orleanians in a cross-generational, cross-cultural synthesis of styles and sounds that was head-spinning in its implications and executions.

Consider the ensemble's treatment of "St. James Infirmary," a well-worn New Orleans jazz standard. The musicians, clad in tie-dye African chic, included Kone on a wooden xylophone outfitted with tiny bells that chattered with each stroke; Jason Marsalis on a more traditional xylophone; traditional jazz clarinetist Michael White; alto saxophonist Rex Gregory; pedal steel guitarist Marc Stone; piano accordionist Sunpie Barnes; electric bassist Matt Perrine; and vocalist Margie Perez.

Kone opened "St. James Infirmary" with a pattern of tones on his xylophone. White and Gregory harmonized on the melody. Perez took her time with the vocals, singing both sad and strong. Marsalis checked in with a dreamy vibe solo, only to climb out atop the melody once again. It was a welcome, fresh way to experience such a well-trod standard.

For the final number, a Kone original, a frame of percussion was dressed by sneaky pedal steel moans and Marsalis tip-toeing over his vibes. Kone eventually flipped his sizeable xylophone atop his head, then swung it around in a circle.

His fresh infusion of African sensibility, direct from the source, is a welcome twist.

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Seguenon Kone performs Saturday, May 2,  
2009 at the New Orleans Jazz Festival.