

SONGLINES

REVIEWS

Africa



Another issue, another Touareg
Top of the World – this time it's
Bombino from Niger

Bombino Agadez

Cumbancha Discovery

Mid Price (54 mins)

★★★★★

There's a new kid on the Touareg block



Omara Moctar earned the nickname Bombino when he was 12 years old – a mere bambino exiled from his native Niger and living in Tahaggart Choumera, the Touareg ghetto of Tamanrasset in southern Algeria. His precocious dexterity on the guitar and explosive energy on stage were already earning him an enviable reputation. It's taken a decade and a half for that early promise to mature, but he's now an axe-wielding phenomenon with the potential to go global. *Agadez* is payback time.

Bombino has understood one of the basic secrets of success in this increasingly crowded field: make sure you don't sound like a Tinariwen copy. His style has an ease and fluidity that can be imputed to those long years of obscure apprenticeship and to the fact that guitarists from Niger have always been a little more flowery and embellished than their counterparts in Mali, who favour the skeletal simplicity that Tinariwen is famous for. The elfin-featured Bombino rocks like a Saharan Santana on tracks such as 'lyat Idounia Ayasahen', but his guitar can also float serenely, as it does on the opener 'Ahoulaguine Akaline'. That wonderful Touareg roll is in full effect on the sublime 'Kammou Taliat' and the yearning melancholy that marks the best of this music is heard on 'Adounia' and 'Tigrawahi Tikma'. The production work of filmmaker Ron Wyman and sound engineer Chris Decato is close to perfect: not too sweet, not too harsh, neither monotonous or gimmicky. *Agadez* heralds a new star on those infinite desert horizons.

**TOP
OF THE
WORLD
ALBUM**



Andy Morgan

Songlines - Top of the World Album- July 2011

