

Youssou N'Dour - 7 Seconds - The Best Of Youssou N'Dour (2004)

Written by bluesever

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01. *New Africa* [00:03:43] 02. *Undecided (Japoulo)* [00:07:27] 03. *Mouvement (Dunya)* [00:04:26] 04. *7 Seconds (With Neneh Cherry)* [00:08:54] 05. *Yo Le Le (Fulani Groove)* [00:10:12] 06. *Without A Smile* [00:12:49] 07. *Please Wait* [00:08:22] 08. *Country Boy* [00:05:16] 09. *Birima* [00:08:04] 10. *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da* [00:07:36] 11. *Old Man* [00:05:46] 12. *No More* [00:12:54] 13. *Set (Live)* [00:08:28] 14. *Oh Boy (Live)* [00:06:26] 15. *Don't Look Back* [00:12:54] 16. *Things Unspoken* [00:07:01] Personnel: Youssou N'Dour, Neneh Cherry (vocals); Abdoulaye Diouf (spoken vocals); Kevin Armstrong, Pape Oumar Ngom, Jimi Mbaye (guitar); Thiemo Koite (soprano saxophone, alto saxophone); Issa Cissocko (tenor saxophone); Brad Wheeler, Branford Marsalis (saxophone); Ron Meza (trumpet); Glenn Ferris (trombone); Habib Faye (keyboards, bass); Ibrahima Cisse, Jean Philippe Rykiel, Mac Fallows (keyboards); Jerry Wonder, Andy Shafte (programming); Wyclef Jean (background vocals).

Youssou N'Dour has two sides to his career. There's the hard-driving mbalax style that he created by fusing calypso, Latin and pop to traditional Senegalese music. Then there's the (some would say overproduced) world-beat pop that recalls the later work of Peter Gabriel. Falling into the latter category, *7 Seconds* is a 16-track collection that draws from two Columbia albums from the early 1990s and a French import of 2000 (*Joko (From The Village To Town)*) as well as two cuts from a 1994 live-for-radio recording. The most interesting tidbit, however, is N'Dour's near straight reading of the Beatles' "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," which came out as Japanese-only single in 1996. The duet with Neneh Cherry on "7 Seconds" shows how good of Western pop singer N'Dour is, but he also does well on the soul classic "Don't Look Back," which features Wyclef Jean. This is definitely a strong argument for reevaluating N'Dour's poppier material. ---Tad Hendrickson

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This 16-track compilation covers Senegalese singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Youssou N'Dour's Columbia Records period, from 1991 to 1996. Perhaps the most popular pop culture figure in Senegal's history, N'Dour created a music of his own from various sources, which he called "mbalax" and which incorporates everything from jazz, soul, hard R&B styles, hip-hop, and even Cuban samba, and juxtaposes them with the folk melodies and polyrhythms of his native land. The cuts here, particularly "Old Man," "New Africa," "Yo le Le, (Fulani Rhythm)," and the covers of Smokey Robinson's "Don't Look Back," and Lennon and McCartney's "Ob-La-Di-Ob-La-Da," reveal N'Dour's idiosyncratic, yet very accessible grasp and integration of Western and African pop styles. ~ Thom Jurek

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