



Gangbé Brass Band *Assiko*

Contre-Jour CJ021

Full Price (54 mins)



Heavy metal



Listening to the Gangbé Brass Band in full flow is a bit like hearing a Welsh colliery or British army band, through a sonic prism of African timbres and rhythms. All the ingredients are there: crisp trumpets and trombones, scuttling tuba, even at times a rattling snare drum. But this music is for dancing, not marching. With an additional array of West African percussion, this super-tight Beninese outfit make irresistible dance floor-filling music. *Gangbé* means 'sound of metal' in the Fon language and the all-male ensemble are very much a product of Benin's heritage, having taken military instruments from the colonial era and allied them with local percussion and rhythms as well as jazz influences, creating something unmistakably African in the process.

Assiko is the band's third album and it is energetic and joyous. Tracks such as 'Un Été à Vodéléé' and 'Yonnatché' are a sustained swirl of instrumental sound that never lose an ounce of rhythmic momentum. Like all good big bands, the Gangbé Brass Band's approach is to dazzle, with complex, feet-moving riffs and tight ensemble playing laying the groundwork for brief soaring solos. Some songs include group singing and chanting, something that is probably more successful live, but which nonetheless adds to the humour and genial feel of the album. In fact, the overwhelming impression of *Assiko* is that the Gangbé Brass Band would blow the roof off any stage they were put on.

Tim Woodall

**TOP
OF THE
WORLD
ALBUM**

