

Aboubacar Djéliké Kouyate – griot moderne

BIOGRAPHY

'The West African [griot](#) is a troubadour, the counterpart of the medieval European minstrel ... [whose] virtuoso talents ... command universal admiration ... [and] is the culmination of long years of study and hard work under the tuition of a teacher who is often a father or uncle.' *Francis Bebey, 1969, 1975. African Music, A People's Art, Lawrence Hill Books Brooklyn*

Traditionally, a griot (French) or jeli (Mandinka; Bambara) is a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet and/or musician.

The Kouyate line of griots that exists to this day, emerged during the Malian Empire of the 13th century. True to this, Malian musician Aboubacar Djéliké Kouyate was born into the djeli tradition in the riverside village of Djoliba during the 1970s and from the age of seven, under the eye of his father Adama Kouyate ([Super Rail Band Bamako](#)), began formal training in the inherited oral and instrumental traditions that have been passed down through the centuries.

At the age of seventeen, Aboubacar left Mali and continued his immersion in Mandenka music and culture for more than a decade in wider **West Africa**, with mentor Moussa Sylla's troupe *Allah Tantoo* in Guinea, and as a member of the *Mamady Cissoko Ballet* in Senegal. When he moved to the Gambia, Aboubacar created his first group *The Cultural Sundiata Band* and eventually arrived in **Lille, France** at the age of 28. This era opened up opportunities for many new collaborations, in particular with musician Simon Demouveaux (*Hassan Bossou Gnawa Racines*) to form the band ***Badala Foly***, which Aboubacar continues to lead.

Over the past 17 years Aboubacar has sustained an active career as a professional musician in **France and neighbouring European countries**, leading two bands as singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist, as a contributor to many other musical collaborations, and as a teacher of African percussion, story and culture in the broader community. During this time Aboubacar has also regularly returned to his home in **Djoliba, Mali** for extended periods, organising and leading cultural study tours from Europe, reconnecting with his griot community, heritage, identity and traditions, and making music every day with old and new acquaintances.

In late 2017, Aboubacar journeyed to Melbourne with his guitar as his companion, to reunite with Australian friends made in Morocco in 2010, and to see for himself 'the live music capital of the world'. For three months Aboubacar explored the city, enjoyed the summer weather, made many new friends and accepted every invitation to informally jam and make music. Continuing contact with his new Melbourne connections in 2018 generated and sustained his hopes for a return visit, culminating in the grant of a temporary work visa that allowed Aboubacar to fulfil an organised **Melbourne, Australia** tour of 14 gigs during the summer of 2019.

Aboubacar is always seeking new opportunities to share his passion and experience, and desire to expand his own boundaries and potential, in partnership with other musicians and diverse communities. During the 2019 Melbourne tour, Aboubacar connected with local and much-respected bassist Mark Ferrie, seeding the beginnings of ***Djoliba Rattler***, a new and innovative musical collaboration based in Melbourne. Aboubacar has secured an Australian resident visa which has allowed him to fully commit to this still-emerging and exciting project that has been slowly taking shape during 2020 and 2021.

Today, Aboubacar's performances represent a lifetime of dedication and passion for the tradition he has inherited. He brings an exuberant and contemporary interpretation of the traditional 'griot' art form, combining his masterful command of voice, instrument, rhythm, lyric and fellow musicians into compelling, danceable song sets.