

"Hailing from Madagascar, musician and environmental activist Razia uses her latest album, Akory, to impart an urgent message: save Africa from ecological destruction. The title of this, Razia's second album, translates as 'What Now?' in her native Malagasy, and amplifies the concerns of her highly praised 2010 debut Zebu Nation. It follows, too, from her important work to save Madagascar's rainforests and protect its biodiversity. Razia is schooled in the gentle sounds of Malagasy salegy music – accordions, acoustic guitars, lukanga lutes and valihas, the traditional bamboo zithers found across the country. With sections of added brass and mellifluous electric guitars, Akory vibrates with an upbeat mood. But for all the sweetness of the music and its easy harmonies, there is a terrible brutality to her message. Songs with titles such as 'How Will We Survive?', 'My Child' and 'Chasing Our Tails' are wrapped in a grimness that is at odds with Akory's obvious tenderness. But all is not lost: Razia's music is as impressively energetic as her activism. She is too smart to offer simple answers to corrupt rule, the lure of the fast buck and the devastating consequences of deforestation. But, in raising awareness in such an expressive way, and as someone who sees the potential for positive change at all social and political levels, she is to be applauded. As she sings it: 'Don't wait for tomorrow/ Let's act today for our happiness.' ★★★★★ Review of Akory in New Internationalist January / February 2015

NOW

WHAT?

