



**NOISE OF  
THE WORLD**



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THE WORLD**

**NON-WESTERN MUSICIANS  
IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

**BY HANK BORDOWITZ**

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# FOREWORD

*If you walk up to troubadours on the Nile River and ask them what they were playing, they wouldn't say "world music." My understanding of what "world music" is doing in the marketplace is to defocus real ethnic music. Also, when we call something 'world music' we're obviously saying it's not our world. If it were our world, it would include all the music in the store, the rest of the stuff from our culture. When we say this is "world music," what we really mean is it's out there and it's not to do with us.*

—Keith Jarrett

Before anything, there was the drum. For some Africans as recently as six decades ago, the word spread by drum, the drum communicated. Like the drum communicates, music communicates, often where words cannot. Arabs and Israelis do not agree on much, but young Israelis crowd the streets of Tel Aviv to hear the new jack Arabic rappers.



Few things in contemporary music get the blood racing like the sound of the drum. That's why the tiny dancefloor at SOB's—New York City's premier club for non-Western artists—and similar clubs throughout the Western world, steam like Trinidad and other locations whence they book talent. The air conditioning doesn't stand a chance with all the heat generated by the bands and the bodies undulating on the dancefloor, in the aisles, by the bar and wherever they can find a patch of floor.

On the other hand, human nature says go with what you know. Far more people have seen *The Magnificent Seven* and *Star Wars* than *The Seven Samurai* or *Yojimbo*. Yet, the American movies merely put these classic Japanese films into a more familiar package. More people study the art Picasso based on African masks than appreciate the artistry of the masks themselves.

These days, we truly live in a global village, where at any given moment a person can see what's going on in Iraq or Tel Aviv or the House of Commons without leaving the living room. As information becomes a commodity, cross-cultural pollination naturally occurs. Nearly anywhere you go in the world, you can find a McDonald's and Western pop music.

But what's this we're hearing? A pop star from Queens playing South African sheshwe? A founder of New York new wave recording with Latin artists and reissuing Brazilian records? A jazz singer leading an American choir in South African mbube? A vocalist from Senegal singing with an English rock star?

Not long ago, very few Americans knew anything about African, Caribbean, Arabic, or Asian music. Listening to Cuban music was just short of seditious. You might hear Celtic music on St. Patrick's Day. Flamenco music was something you saw in movies, where men made more noise with their heels than with guitars and the vocals didn't matter at all. You might hear Indian film music on a quick flip through the UHF channels in a major urban area. The Western attitude toward non-Western music is well summed up in the Jamaican film *Rockers*, where a white couple is sitting in an outdoor café listening to a reggae band and the man leans over to the woman and says, "This isn't calypso."

Clearly, more people own *Graceland* than know of Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens. Bobby McFerrin's version of South African choral music has a somewhat better chance in the Western marketplace than Ladysmith Black Mambazo—even post-*Graceland*—if only because he performs it in English.

David Byrne's excursions into Afro-Spanish and Portuguese culture carry cachet because they carry his name, as did Talking Heads's forays into African rhythms. Far more people know Youssou N'Dour for the Peter Gabriel *So* tour than for his superstar status in Senegal. Even Bob Marley never enjoyed the Western acceptance with his music that Eric Clapton did. Kid Creole's calypso pan-Americanisms stay better known than Arrow's Brooklyn-based socas, which stay better known than island-bound Blue Boy. Artists ranging from groundbreaking jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman to Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones went to the far reaches of Morocco's Atlas Mountains to record with the Master Musicians of Jajouka. The indigenous artists, the originators, rarely enjoy the fame and fortune of the imitators.

On the other hand, this exposure is important. In the way that people started digging for the roots of the blues when the Rolling Stones and Blues Breakers rode to fame on that music, people “discovered” the joy of Bob Marley and reggae; of isiscathamiya music and its foremost purveyors, Ladysmith Black Mambazo; the fusion of traditional Spanish music and artists like the Gipsy Kings and Paco de Lucia. And the world became a smaller, more rhythmic place.

Musicologists ventured into the central African jungles to record the drummers of Burundi. These recordings found favor with English new-wave musicians like Bow Wow Wow and Visage who used it as the basis of their work. Even the DJ at the late, lamented Peppermint Lounge in Manhattan used to close the place down with the music of the late, great Nigerian drummer Olatunji and his *Drums of Passion*.

These musicians came from deep traditions. Gnawa musicians like Hassan Hakmoun spent years training in the healing ceremonies of their musical and cultural tradition, as do the South

African Malombo drummers with whom Dr. Philip Tabane performs and records.

Stores like Sterns Records in London and others in Paris started offering records from Africa to the many expatriates gathered in these metropolitan hot-spots of Europe. When Jamaica became independent of England, expatriate Jamaicans flooded the country, seeking a better life than their infant nation promised. They brought their music with them, and smart entrepreneurs like Chris Blackwell started to import it as well.

The sound spread through the English art schools like rhythm and blues had reached out to white musicians a generation earlier. Mainstream record stores began to stock the music, often putting it into a small section of the store with the label “World Music.” Here, Adam Ant, Bow Wow Wow’s Dave Barbarossa, and Rusty Egan of Visage discovered the drummers of Burundi.

The musicians among the expatriates had as large an influence as the records. They started to work with English musicians. The seventies jazz-rock band Traffic, formed by Steve Winwood, employed several African drummers. Later, Winwood would record on their albums. Western musicians from renowned jazz trumpeter Lester Bowie to Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Ginger Baker, one of Eric Clapton’s partners in the seminal British blues band Cream, went to Nigeria to work with Fela. Baker eventually set up a studio in Nigeria. Gloria and Emilio Estefan couched their Cuban roots in a pop sound accessible to everyone.

Western artists draw on the music of developing nations, either to kick start their own muses or when those muses take a leave of absence. Discounting the black roots of contemporary Western pop (the subject for theses rather than mass-market books), musicians from the industrialized world frequently extract elements of “emerging nations” music into their own art, sometimes championing it, sometimes merely exploiting it.

“I’m an addict for that soca beat,” August “Kid Creole” Darnell remarks. “My ex-wife is Haitian. She used to play this calypso, reggae music all the time. That is a strong element in my music today, the island, Latin, calypso feel.”

Nothing new about this. Jelly Roll Morton often used the syncopated rhythms from the Spanish Caribbean to give his music “a Latin tinge.” During the 1930s and 1940s, bands from Cuba and Puerto Rico spawned dance crazes across America. The mambo, one of the biggest, is loosely based on Afro-Cuban religious rites, likely via Angola. American dance bands adopted and adapted these rhythms into their sets. One of the Ellington band’s best-known tunes remains “Caravan,” a Latinesque composition by his Puerto Rican trombonist, Juan Tizol. By 1947, Dizzy Gillespie put together his own Afro-Cuban jazz band. In the early fifties, drummer and band leader Desi Arnaz brought the sound to television on *I Love Lucy*. Since the mid-fifties, Sonny Rollins has infused his bop with calypso rhythms. The sixties saw Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd adapting rhythms from Brazil. In the seventies and eighties, artists as diverse as Oliver Lake and Stevie Wonder reggaefied recordings.

While indigenous, primarily black, musics from developing nations have become a cult phenomenon in recent years, major labels regard it as a loss leader. Virgin’s expectations of a Paula Abdul album differ from anything they put out on their Earthworks or Real World sub-labels. Promoted to the existing core of fans, reviews are read by the converted rather than the convertible, albums danced to in specialty clubs rather than appreciated for their general dancability. While Paul Simon might garner hits with mbaqanga and foros, the artists who created and continue these traditions are regarded as too ethnic or earthy to appeal to a mainstream audience.

And even the music that gets released in America has to conform with a mainstream musical agenda. When he was alive, few major Western labels would deal with Fela, despite the fact that he recorded more or less in English. Frequently the themes of his songs were intra-African politics, accurate or nasty enough that they landed him in prison for over two years on a trumped up charge. Beyond that, he has a reputation for personal wildness, with twenty-seven ex-wives (“They are now just mothers of my children,” he once explained) and a fondness for herb. *The beat may be infectious*, you can hear the record companies thinking, *but is it worth the risk?* Then there’s King Sunny Ade who indulges in few of these excess-

es, but also finds corporate Western acceptance a problem since he failed to replace Bob Marley as the great non-Western hope, a role his record company at the time had hoped he would fill.

Many artists from these developing countries assimilate aspects of the West into their musical traditions. While the Nazis failed to take over the world in the Second World War, Western media did. Armed Forces Radio spread American popular music across the planet. In Nigeria, palm wine musicians, who played a simple music on drums, soda bottles and traditional stringed instruments, adapted the sound to horns and electric guitars giving birth to highlife. Yet, the roots of palm wine music remained intact under the Western trappings. Something vital might have passed on (though it is preserved in recordings), but something vibrant, new and unique bloomed out of it.

Some indigenous culture and music manages to survive, and even occasionally thrive, in the wake of the onslaught of Western culture. Marketed as “world music” or “worldbeat,” this music retains a purity, heart, and soul missing in so much of today’s pre-fabricated pop.

Pioneers like David Lewiston took their tape recorders to exotic places like Bali with a mission to capture the indigenous music before it disappeared into the maw of mass culture. But a strange thing happened. Through the efforts and field recordings of people like Lewiston and Alan Lomax, the music didn’t disappear. Even in its native environment, the music got passed on from generation to generation. Sometimes it transformed as palm wine had, taking on aspects of Western music but remaining completely distinctive. Other times it maintained a purity and integrity matched only by the musicians who played it.

While some of the indigenous artists found an audience at home for a music regarded as quaint and folkloric, many only found ridicule. But in the West, they found fellow artists and fans who understood why they chose to keep this music alive. They recognized the passion, magic, and ecstasy in these sounds.

The influential “world beat” doesn’t usually come from field recordings but from the popular musics of these developing nations,

from Cuban son to Zibabwean jive. Fela's Afro-beat had deep Nigerian roots, but it also tapped into James Brown and John Coltrane. King Sunny Ade uses a great deal of traditional Juju in his music, but also invokes Jimmy Reed, especially with his idiosyncratic use of slide guitar. Brenda Fassi, "South Africa's Madonna," carries more currency than Stella Chiweshe, at home and abroad.

"When the television was introduced," noted South African record producer West Nkosi pointed out, "they did not have regular material to show the audience. What they did was get videos from all over the world. That alone has got a very, very big influence to the people. You press your button and on the screen, there's Michael Jackson. Then everybody thought, if you want to appear on that box, you have to dance like Michael Jackson or sing like him."

Yet traditions all over the world survive, despite the onslaught of Western cultural imperialism. In truth, *Graceland* exposed many of these artists to an audience that might otherwise never have known. The same thing that helped Paul Simon out of his slump also vastly expanded the audience for the a cappella purity of Ladysmith Black Mambazo. But some of the accompanied funk tracks on their last album raise the question of the cost in artistic corruption. Wonderful music from Haiti and the Caribbean still knocks 'em dead at home. Gutsy sounds continue to power the clubs from Dakar to Durban. Even though a relatively small audience checks it out in America, there are pleasures in rai, zouk, and soukous that have yet to be exploited. But without this music, where would the next big beat come from?

The noise of the world is exciting. It's exotic. It moves people in a way that Western pop music has forgotten, reaches down for the kernel of why man started making music in the first place. It's primitive and cosmopolitan. It speaks to people, even if they don't know the language. It reaches people in their guts and their butts as well as their brains.

This book does not aim to explain this musical phenomenon that has spread like wildflowers in the wind, piquing the imaginations of several generations of music fans. Rather, through oral histories gathered over the course of the past twenty years, it allows the cre-

ators of this music to discuss their own motivations, methods, and passions in making their musical statements.

Never before has the interest in these artists been so keen or the diversity of music from around the globe become so generally available. Most of the people who record in developing countries, or make non-Western roots music have a viewpoint unlike ours, whether it was the way Paul Simon was changed after recording with musicians from South Africa or the way the Gipsy Kings lives changed after they fell into the mainstream.

The world of music continues to get smaller as more artists discover non-Western sounds and take their fans along with them. This book features dozens of non-Western artists (and a few Western ones) presenting the world of music from their own perspective, solely in their own words.

Through twenty years of oral histories, the musicians at the heart of these sounds discuss their enthusiasm, their means, and their methods, capturing the non-Western music scene through the ideas of the musicians who create it. Musicians from South Africa talk openly and frankly about making music in pre-Mandela days, when apartheid still ruled. Expatriate artists talk about the pain of separation from their homeland. Gypsies discuss the prejudices against their people that exist even in cosmopolitan places like Barcelona. Through this book, I hope to offer the Western fan of non-Western music a unique insight into the source and soul behind the music, and what leads their favorite artists to create it.

As pop music encompasses the smooth instrumentals of Kenny G and the high velocity rap of Eminem, the noise of the world is even more diverse, embracing music from such fundamentally different locations as the Spanish countryside and the jungles of the Congo, the movie theaters of Bombay to the streets of Bali and even the swamps of Louisiana. It is all manna to Western ears bored with the pablum of pop. Because this music is so varied, I have sectioned the book off by cultural and geographical borders. The music of Western Africa, with its urban sounds, massive drums, and performers sometimes even working in English, is vastly different from the loping music of South Africa, performed in all manner of the

more than a dozen tribal dialects spoken in that country. They deserve to be dealt with as such.

This approach allows the points of view of the artists in each section the chance to resonate with each other. Not that all will agree. There is as much dissent between the artistic and holistic outlooks of Nigerian artists like Sunny Ade and Fela as there is between a Christian rock band and a satanic metal band. That goes with any creative territory.

The oral histories include artists who left a massive musical legacy, like Fela, and artists who continue to make crucial recordings, like Winston “Burning Spear” Rodney. They feature artists whose music has become part of the “mainstream,” like the Gipsy Kings and Gloria Estefan, talking about their tradition and that transition from the fringes of acceptance to the pop culture consciousness. They feature artists like Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba, who managed to cross over and garner that rarest of things, a pop hit, while retaining their roots, talking about making music in their native country and in exile.

These open and honest portraits offer the opportunity for a greater appreciation of what is behind these sounds, the suffering many of these artists have endured and triumphs they have enjoyed. I hope you find *Noise of the World* inspirational and informational, offering an extraordinary point of view on what people would have you believe are alien cultures—the viewpoint of the person whose artistic goal is to bring that culture to the world. I further hope this book will help to create a better understanding and appreciation of the artists who make the music by letting them explain how and why they do what they do in their own words.

This book aspires to capture the essence of communication that allows music to transcend borders and cultures and speak to humans on a level somewhere between their gonads, their behinds, their hearts, and their brains. Perhaps this is the location of the soul.





# NORTH AMERICA

## REGGAE

Certainly the most popular genre among the noises of the world, reggae may well be Jamaica's biggest export outside of bauxite, the raw material for making aluminum. Several reggae stars have "crossed over" into the mainstream, with pop hits of their own. Groups like Inner Circle and Aswad as well as dancehall artists like Beenie Man, Sean Paul, and Wayne Wonder have scored on charts and sold lots of records outside of Jamaica as well as on the island.

There are several ironies here. Many, when their career goes "international," move off the island and live in the U.S. or England. Both Burning Spear and Coxsone Dodd call Queens, New York, home.

Further, many complain that they are overshadowed by the man with whom they all have a love/hate relationship, the late Robert Nesta Marley. Ras Bob became a worldwide icon, and both the Western record business and the Jamaican music scene have sought "the next" Bob Marley even twenty years after his passing. From the Western perspective, the artist doesn't have to even be Jamaican or reggae: King Sunny Ade was touted as the next great hope of music from developing nations as Marley's favorite singer, Dennis Brown, went major label as the next logical superstar of reggae. Only there really has not been another artist of Marley's magnitude in terms of consistency, impact, and quite frankly, artistry.



Photograph: Mesa / Bluemoon Recordings

## BLACK UHURU | DUCKIE SIMPSON

*Black Uhuru has had as many permutations as, say, the Rolling Stones, with personnel changes defining the era. The one constant has been Derrick “Duckie” Simpson. Built on the classic reggae vocal trio (think the Wailers or the early Burning Spear), they mixed fiery Rastafarian vibes and heavy politics-of-developing-nations rhetoric with incandescent harmonies and the bad-assed bottom of Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, who came out of one of the hottest (and most rhetorical) bands in the land, Peter Tosh’s group. Every version of the group formed extraordinary vocal ensembles. Stunning harmonies punctuated the lyrics. The group began with Ewin “Don Carlos” Spencer, Rudolph “Garth” Dennis, and Simpson in the early seventies. Dennis went on to a better opportunity (at the time) with the Wailing Souls, Carlos tried to make it as a solo. Michael Rose came in and after a while he was joined by Sandra “Puma” Jones, a Brooklyn social worker (with a master’s from Columbia, no less) who had come to ply her trade in Jamaica, and wound up working with Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus. This trio hooked up with Sly and Robbie and cut four incen-*

*diary albums for Island. Rose went solo, and was replaced by Junior Reid, who by 1987 also went solo. Jones left the band in 1987, due to poor health (she would die of breast cancer in 1990). In 1987, the group went full circle, with Dennis, Carlos, and Simpson singing brilliant harmonies with a political edge. Songs like "Bloodshed" and "Youth of Eglinton" portray vivid scenes of downtrodden people on the brink of revolution.*

Me, Don and Garth, we all came from the same neighborhood, Waterhouse, Kingston 11. It's west Kingston. We've all been in contact with each other, even when we were doing separate things. So, after Junior went on without us, we just decided to reunite the original Black Uhuru.

It just automatically happened. As it was in the beginning, so shall it be. After Junior went solo, I just figured that that was the right move, to go back with Don and them, because they were the originals.

Sly was the one who recorded us. He was the one who had confidence in us and gave us our first major break. So all respect due to Sly. And Sly is a neighbor. We grew up together, we come from the same neighborhood.

I'm not a third world singer. I've been coming for decades, so I'm not the type who goes for DJ music. I strictly go for lyrics. I'm a songwriter, so when I hear stuff that's not put together properly, then I don't really go for it. It doesn't matter how much it sells or how popular it is.

In Jamaica these days, DJ is on the top. DJ is on the top in Jamaica. It's the mentality of the people. The mentality of the people has changed over the decades. It's more gimmicks for their money. People are more into gimmicks in this time than reality and life. Singers like us, and Burning Spear and Culture and those singers, we mostly stay on the reality trends, or revolution or militant. In Jamaica, their mind is more for, like hip-hop and love songs, x-rated songs and DJ stuff. Whatever. Nothing conscious.

Dancehall has a market. That's what's going on down here. The music down here is mostly that type of music. It's not like in the

eighties. Singers like Black Uhuru, and other singers who sing cultural, political lyrics don't really go across in Jamaica now. They're more for the gimmicks.

That's not raggamuffin stuff. Raggamuffin is anything that is hardcore. Shabba Ranks is a DJ. So you can be raggamuffin if you're a DJ, and you can also be raggamuffin if you're a singer. It depends on the lyrics that you put out, that makes you be raggamuffin. Raggamuffin would be hardcore lyrics, not about sex and like that. That would be, we call that lover rock. Raggamuffin is like rebel, militant, revolutionary-wise. Raggamuffin. It's rough and tough. It's not like Shabba Ranks. That's not raggamuffin. That's like GQ.

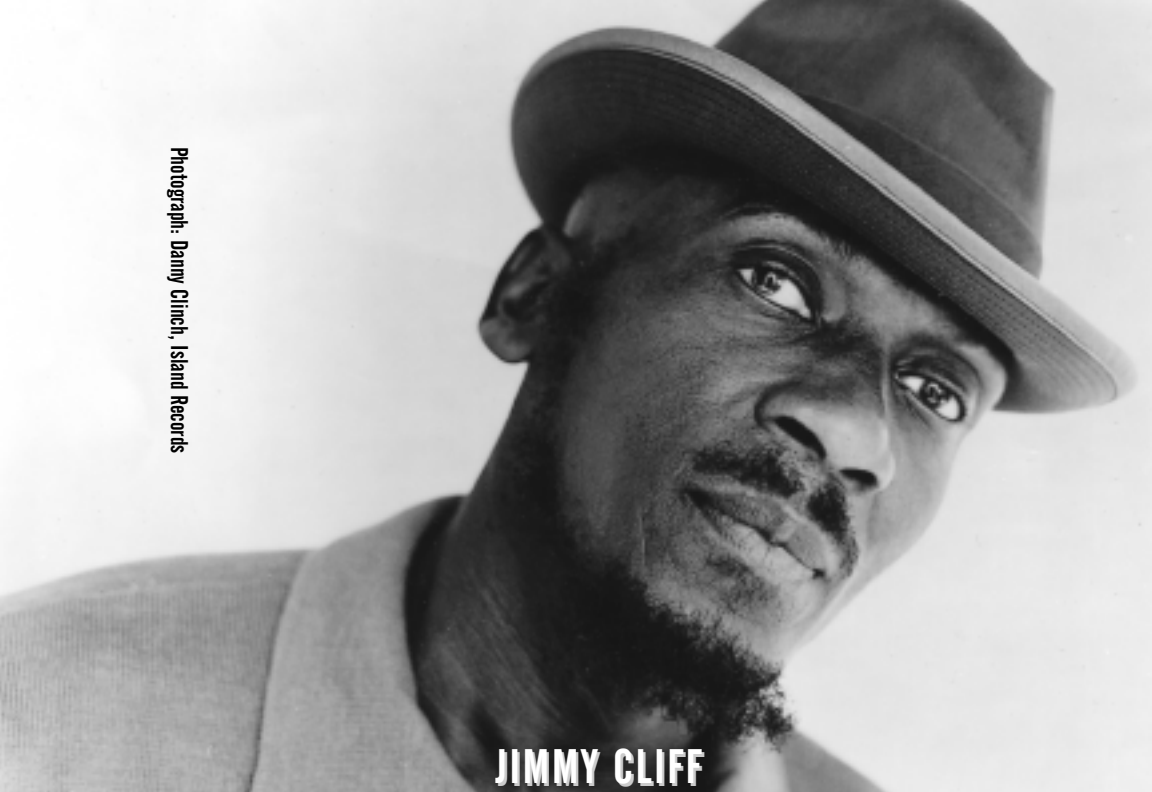
No reggae artists had album sales, apart from Bob Marley. He was the only one who ever had album sales. He was the only one who slipped through the system and they weren't aware. After that era, the American tycoons, the American companies, all those big tycoons were so aware, they made sure no one else slipped through the system.

All the evidence is there. No Jamaican artist has ever benefitted from that level from reggae, apart from Bob. And I know a lot of other artists who do good songs. But it goes with the marketing strategy and the promotion and the input that they put into it. They're not going to put a certain amount of input in a reggae artist's songs. You notice, whoever sings reggae, apart from the reggae singers, it sells. But when the guys from Jamaica do it, it never sells. When UB40 or the Police do it, it's great.

The problem is, anyone can be signed. I've been signed so many times in my life. Signing is not the key. That's just the first step. The other stages never even manifested.

I'm trying to break into the American market, and I know the way they think and the way they operate. We are trying to get across to the black market. The people up there have a broader mind. You see, the media plays a lot of tricks on the people down here. The music business has switched from in the eighties, from this drug problem starts arising, and they started putting the stigma on Jamaica, that all Jamaicans are druggies, murderers.

People get killed everywhere in the world. Even Malcolm X and Martin Luther got shot in America, man. The president of America. They've killed so many presidents compared to Peter Tosh. So, people get killed everywhere in the world. But maybe some people have the right to do it. That's the way that it seems. What's happening in Jamaica is petty compared to what's happening in America.



## JIMMY CLIFF

*Even before Bob Marley broke through in the seventies, Jimmy Cliff brought Jamaican rocksteady to the States as the star of the cult classic film, *The Harder They Come*. The soundtrack to this record became the reggae primer for many listeners. This included Cliff's many musical contributions, like "Many Rivers To Cross" and the title track. This established Cliff on several fronts. He earned respect as an actor, which has led to many other roles. He also earned respect outside of Jamaica as a singer, one of the first Jamaican artists to do this and maintain it. In Africa, where reggae has a following that has spawned stars like Lucky Dube and Majek Fashek, Cliff is a major star. However, even having a reputation has its downside, especially something as indelible as *The Harder They Come*. Very little could be as diametrically opposed as the outlaw character that Cliff played in the film and the gentle man Cliff actually is. About all that is similar are the dynamic performances.*

There was a point in my career when I was trying to break out of *The Harder They Come*, but I realized somewhere along the line

that at least it's good to have an anchor, something that you can be identified with.

Every few months I get a few new scripts, and I read them. I have my music to fall back on, so if the scripts aren't what I like, I don't do them. I was offered a part in *Crocodile Dundee 2*. They wanted me to play a drug pusher around New York. I can't play that. It would ruin my image. Luckily, I have my music to fall back on, so acting . . . I don't have to rely on that totally for my livelihood. So I don't have to take something I don't want.

That anchor, that image from *The Harder They Come*, was a positive image. It was the image of the fighter in society, which we all are. All of us are trying to get ahead as human beings in society, regardless of whether you are born rich or born poor. Some of us have it easier, yeah. But everyone likes a fighter. I think that's a positive image.

That's why a movie like *The Harder They Come* has become a cult classic. Because it comes to the point of telling what is happening in this music business, like the character that I played.

Actually, "Many Rivers To Cross" has kept me going through the lean and mean times. But I don't own the copyright. It was one of those stages of my life when I didn't realize that show business was show and business. You think about the show, but you don't think about the business, I guess.

Island Publishing owns the publishing on those songs I did at the time. I was bitter about that at one stage of my life, but you can't go around carrying bitterness. It only affects the individual. It was a stage of my life when I did something in my ignorance and it's gone, so I have to move on.

I was at a party at Chris Blackwell's home in Jamaica not long ago. Two or three groups played. It was okay. Chris Blackwell has to be respected for who he is. He was the person who was there at the time, to see that this music could do something. He has a good ear, he knows the business well, he has a good sense of image and that sort of thing, so yes, I heard about it and I went.

People have accused me of sounding too pop. On all of my albums, there's always at least one track that identifies me with the roots of what people are expecting. But being a creative person, I



like to expand and do other things. If it turns out to be pop, to put a label on it, then that's what it is. Dance music is most popular, all over Africa, whether they are English speaking or French speaking Africa. It's something that I've always wanted to do, because I love Zairian dance music.

I was listening to South African music long ago. I have stacks of tapes from the seventies. I've been listening to that. Tape swapping is a typical third world thing, a so-called third world thing. You'll find a situation like that also in Nigeria and Zaire or Sierra Leone, or in Bahia in Brazil.

There was a time when I dropped off touring for a while, but when I go on the road, I carry a lot of African music from all over. That's what I listen to on the road. I only listen to the radio to hear what's happening commercially, but for my pleasure, that's what I listen to. I don't even know some of their names, but when I go to Africa I say, "Play me something." They'll play me some records, and I say, "I'll take that."

I always wanted to work with African music, but I didn't go to Zaire to record. I went there just to do this tour of Zaire for two weeks and then go home. But I got intrigued. I've been listening to it for years, and I got intrigued. I went to these clubs, and everywhere you go, you hear this music. I'd just hang out every night, start talking to the musicians, and suggestions of recording come up. So I started to find out how, and I had some songs.

It's difficult to record there. You have to go across the river to the Congo to record. It's a hassle. You hire a boat to take you across the river. If you miss that boat you have to go on the regular big boat. It's a different mentality. It's like Jamaica in the fifties, the musician mentality. Meaning, it's a happy-go-lucky, "I play my music because I like it" sort of thing. I found that I went through hell to record two songs. I do have the complete tape, and eventually I'll release it for people who love music.

Of course, all of these countries are on a different rhythm, the rhythm of the people is different. The rhythm in Africa is a very happy, carefree type of thing. It's loose and it's tight. The rhythm in America is similar to the rhythm of France and England, because

people are more into I-tech, and they become a little more sensitive to how that is going to sound. So, whereas like Jamaica and Africa, you just go for the feel, and if the feel is good, everything is all right, whereas here, you're focusing a lot on what it sounds like.

When I studied African music, in West Africa there's a different feel, a different type of rhythms, in South Africa there's a different feel, a different type of rhythms, in West Africa there's a different feel, and in North Africa there's a different feel. And in Central Africa, like Zaire and the Congo, there's a different feel.

No matter where I record, I haven't changed my theme about struggle, which is what a lot of my songs are all about. Over the years, I sing about struggle.

I put out an album almost every year. If it doesn't make a big impression in America and England, which are the music centers of the world, it still makes an impression on the countries that matter to me, like Africa or Brazil, so whatever I put out still makes an impression. Reggae is always here.

## WINSTON “BURNING SPEAR” RODNEY

*In the close to three decades that he has been performing as Burning Spear, Winston Rodney has managed to slide that razor's edge between entertaining and challenging, capturing creative magic with a conscious message. Those who only know Burning Spear's scabrous seventies reggae classics Marcus Garvey and Man in the Hills can still enjoy the original, horn driven reggae sound of Spear and his burning band. However, the years have smoothed a lot of Spear's rough edges. His political messages have become subtler, his music and voice more refined. He has started to sing love songs, not just to Rastafari but to women. The conscious, political Spear perseveres, but the scabrous Spear vanished in a cloud of tight, soulful, contemporary rock steady. This tightness reflects the economy of performing—in the seventies, Spear used whatever band he could pick up. Through the eighties and nineties, he has maintained the Burning band, tight, professional and his when he wants them. He sums this up musically in his early nineties song “Mi Gi Dem”: “Gi dem what dey want, reggae music in Jamaica, reggae music in America, reggae music in Africa.” He and his band play well over one hundred shows a year to thousands of people. If interest might be waning in Jamaica, Europe and the U.S. remain strong and his audience in Africa continues to grow.*

To be honest, my sound will always change. I will always be creative within and around my sound, always maintaining that original flavor and that original standard.

The current direction of music in Jamaica is a direction I myself did expect. In the fifties, sixties, and seventies, I knew the music wouldn't be the same way. I knew that you would have a younger

generation coming through from that time where it would require a different flavor of music, a different taste. There is not a problem, really, with the music that we're listening to today, but I think people need to take time out and get their lyrics more properly together. But, this approach, musically, is very good as long as they can keep it intelligent and keep it clean and create a little more education within it and around it. But, it's a good step. People showing what they can do, but as I say, some people intend, at times, to show people the wrong side. Wherein, I don't think the music needs that kind of side. This music we're listening to today, it's good. It's plain to see it's another strain coming around from the original section of the music.

In a sense, they actually sound the same way. It's like the brothers who are doing the rapping in America. You have to listen good, otherwise they are all sounding the same way. After a while all these people start sounding the same way because they are actually doing the same thing. It's not like somebody trying to be creative in a different direction. Everyone is trying to be creative in one direction. Pretty early, people are going to get more confused. They just can't understand what they're listening to.

I wouldn't want to take that direction. It's not dealing with too much of a constructiveness. It's more like a money making direction. That's not saying that we shouldn't be paid or we shouldn't like making money. Of course, that's necessary. But that direction has no protection, there's no guide from that direction for the music. It's not like the people who are in control of that direction doing something to help the music, to lift it up, to have it going places, presenting the music to people who need music.

It's not like that. It's a money-making thing. It's like a real estate business. Some people get involved in the real estate business, not because they like real estate business, but because they can put in x amount of money and triple up their money. They're not doing it to help people to have houses to live. It's like the music. It's a big, wide commercial thing. It's a money thing. It's not like in the seventies, when people would get involved in the music to strengthen it because they knew what we were doing was constructive, what we were saying was the right thing. It's not like that.

Many years ago, for a company to sign a brother who was doing DJ work, it was like you're crazy, signing people like those. Today, if you're not dealing with stuff like that, that is the first thing you're going to say, "You're not going to make money." I think you can make money, but promotion is the key, and proper marketing.

Outside Jamaica, people look up more to the music that Burning Spear puts out today. When I say "outside Jamaica," I mean Europe and other places. America today, and the day before today, is very tight in terms of getting what you'd like to get done, and get it done properly. America has so many different types of music that for reggae music to come through and be on top of all these musics that were here before, it's just not possible. The closest artist up to now, who really got so close, is Bob Marley. And Bob Marley was the only reggae artist promoted properly and that they did market properly. Since that, it's like they created a barrier around that standard of music, that kind of flavor music, preventing it from going places that it usually went before. But there is a market for the music that I'm dealing with, that other people are dealing with, the same kind of quality music. We always have a market, and we always will have a market for that music.

When I played with the Clash, the Talking Heads, UB40, to me, that is fun, you know. That is like mystic, more than exciting, playing for those people who were never really into reggae that much. I start playing and I see how much the people are into what I was dealing with. That is very good. That just goes to show you that the quality of music that I and I are dealing with, people are there for it. People want it. And any time we go up there, people accept what we're dealing with.

Along the way you grow, and that maturing starts to spread itself out. Each time we go into the studio, we try to get deeper and deeper with our arrangements. Tightness. Mixing has a lot to do with it too. You can lay the tracks, and all the tracks can lay properly, but if it's not mixed properly, you end up having a problem. It's a wide combination of everything.

I want the people to know that the kind of music I stand up for today, which is the original section of the whole, we have a wide

level of support, of people who support my concerts and people who keep buying the records. Today, I will go places and I will work and I will perform and I will draw more people than any young person today will draw. You can pick out the places where this kind of music is strong, and you can pick out the place where, when performers go to perform this kind of music today, you can see the kind of people who attend. It depends on the kind of artist.

What we try to do with the arranging is bring in every little thing, a little African song cutting across, a little jazz cut in there, a little blues cut in there. You know, we try to be that kind of creative and blend in everything. Music is not just one thing or one sound. A lot of different things create the sound, and you get that kind of taste, that sweetness. We intend to maintain that sweetness within and around the music, by not preventing with the original.

Out of toughness can bring sweetness and sweetness can become toughness. It's a combination. Something is rough but it's sweet. Something is sweet, but it's rough. But it's not dangerous. Dangerous can be some thing good and it can be something bad.

I listen to African music, I listen to Fela, I listen to Sunny Ade, I listen to Thomas Mapfumo. I listen to a wide variety of Africans. I listen to a little blues now and again. I, Fela, and Sunny Ade, we worked together in 1989. We did a tour in West Africa, Nigeria, places like that, Liberia, Zaire, places like those. I've been to Africa a couple of times. Reggae is big. Africa has many people to buy any amount of records once the business is settled over there.

After a period of time, many of us get pretty big in the business. Not big in terms of rich, but big in terms of matureness. So, we get more capable to do a lot of things with the music, especially in our section of the music, this type of music, we can do a lot of things. I'm here to show people that our first step towards presenting quality like that, an album like this carrying a lot of different quality flavors and tastes.

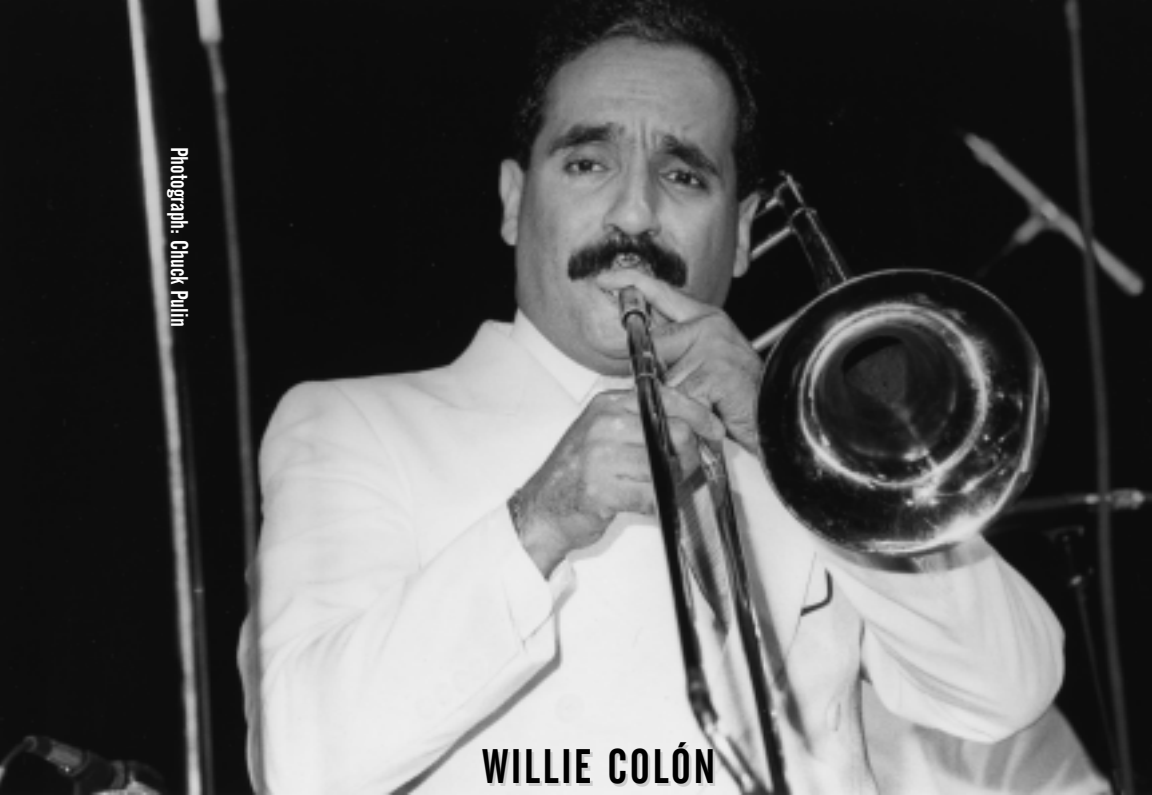
I've learned a lot. I had no understanding pertaining to the business. I made sure I got as much understanding as I could about the business. When I found out how the business is supposed to be run, I handled it. I took care of it. You've got to have a good attorney.

You've got to have an accountant. You've got to have people around you who are not there only to achieve a weekly salary. They have to be there to strengthen the whole foundation and deepen it. There are a lot of artists in the reggae business who don't set themselves up properly. I think the first step in the business is to know the business.

You don't have as much bands working like a couple of years ago. People don't deal with bands. Even in the studio. Now when some brother goes into the studio to make a record, it's not like a musician goes into the studio and tunes their instrument and get down and does some line check and make sure everything is working and be creative and work out some form of arrangement. It's not like that no more. The brother today, they go to the studio with their little machines, and they program whatsoever they want to program and that's it.

Some of these brothers, when they tour, it's not like they tour with a band. They do it more with people doing dancing and stuff like that. They're just singing with the rhythm and stuff like that. Some of these guys are doing the fake. A guy make fake with his guitar, fake around his keyboard, fake with his drummer or his brass or whatsoever. The real thing is not here like at one time. I think when you can see the brother or the sister on the stage, playing that instrument, and it's going through from the board to the monitor, you know, you can see that playing on his face, that expression that he's playing something, and what he's doing is getting across to some people. When you look in the audience, you can see the people responding like they're feeling something. That is how it should be.

The original will always be the original. I will always maintain that original standard. You've got to be strong. From 1969 until today, if I wasn't a strong man, I wouldn't be here talking to you.



## WILLIE COLÓN

*El primero salsero. Willie Colón has been at least partly instrumental in many of the musical innovations in salsa. His band was a breeding ground of talent in next generation salsa, salsa that moved from the strict big-band horn sound that informed Cuban music in the forties to more modern music. Ironically, many of his former sidemen talk about their erstwhile boss as if he were the dinosaur. Willie, however, remains a maverick.*

Salsa is an American music. First of all, you can't forget that the United States and Canada are not alone in this hemisphere. You're just surrounded. And they're going to keep coming. Florida was founded, there are old colonies of Latinos there since before there was the United States. All the way up to Montana was part of Mexico for some time. We've been here for a long time, the Latin culture.

Of all the "foreign" cultures, the one the U.S. knows the best and is the most comfortable with is the Hispanic culture. It's just osmosis. You listen to any commercial on the TV, it's got conga drums



and little shakers. It's accepted to be Latin. It's been here for a long time. We're the minority they know the best.

Salsa was only a New York music at one time. This is where it was born. There was tropical music, they used to call it Afro-Cuban music and mambo and stuff like that, but salsa came from New York. It was different. It was me, Ricardo Rey, Eddie Palmieri, the first guys to really give it that twist and mix these different kinds of genres.

Somewhere along the line, when they closed Cuba off, they were in the middle of this big band thing, Jimmy Dorsey, that sort of thing. When that got cut off, it got frozen in time like something out of the bible, a ritual that everyone would perform; "Oh, we're starting a salsa band, you need four trumpets, blah, blah, blah." Like something from *I Love Lucy*. But I think, if the geopolitical things that did occur hadn't occurred, the music would have progressed parallel. Cuban music would have progressed. And since everyone gauged what this music is supposed to be by its Cuban predecessor, they stayed hung up on the big band concept. But if [the embargos] hadn't happened, it would have had a rock group. It would have been exactly parallel, but it wasn't able to happen.

I don't think there was much of a possibility, when I was growing up, of going into rock or anything. The world wasn't ready for me yet. Salsa was the path of least resistance for me.

But to me there was no conflict, no contradiction with mixing some bamba and plana with Cuban, or copying a line from the Beatles. I just lived all of it. It was integral in my makeup, my musical programming. So early on, I found experimenting would work for me, being raised biculturally and bilingually. In New York, it works for me. There's so much to draw from.

When we started doing the experiments, they kind of stopped and said, "Now wait a minute, you're messing with our shit." So that was good for us.

I first used a synthesizer in 1976, on *Angelitos Negros*. That was when they had those first kind of Moog things that looked like an operator's switchboard and made a little dinky sound, like a Casio does now. My last album had some synths on it. I've had my own little electronics studio and worked with synths since 1984. It's

weird. As soon as I stopped being the main trombone player, it gave me more flexibility. It changed my instrumentation. The more singing I did, the less dependent the sound was on my trombone playing. I think that my putting in the synths and the funky sax kind of tied me into mainstream music, because that's not there. The kind of crew that I was looking for had to do with the change in the sound. I was looking for kids with an Hispanic background, but that were playing other genres, like funk and jazz. The only real *salseros* I had was the rhythm section. So that kind of explains it.

My track record can become a detriment, excess baggage, because I found that going with RCA and Sonotone and A&M, multinationals—I'm so independent, I'm used to saying when do you want the record by, and that's it. I'm not used to people going over budgets with me and sitting down and picking out my material, "Let me hear what you're doing," or coming into the studio. This kind of derails me a little. What I do is instinctive. So I found that it was not a good environment for me as an artist. If I was signed just as an artist, I kind of suffered under another producer, because that's what I am. I was not happy, and it led to a rebellious attitude. I was not able to survive at RCA or A&M. At Fania, they never even ask what the record is going to be about. There's no discussion, it's "When can you have it?" and that's it. That's how I do my best work.

I maintain my independence; I maintain my international licenses. A veteran with so many years in the business, it's kind of scary for a record company, because they can't get me that cheap. I may not be as profitable as some of the youngbloods. Where I could be the most use to a record company like that is as an executive producer, in artist development, in that kind of capacity. I don't think there's anybody out there that has a feeling for both cultures like I do.

When you make a mistake in the record business, it's usually very costly. That's why I wound up with Fania. With them, there is no doubt that I can hit a home run. At least as far as what they need.

The market is always changing. It's not a stable thing. Whenever I think, "Whoa, that was a big hit, let me do that again," it never works. It's like surfing. You have to be on the right part of the wave to ride it.

I never wanted to cross over, just for the sake of crossing over. I just wanted to make a certain kind of music. I've always been a very music-oriented person. That's why I take so long with the production and the arrangements. The music has to be right. I'm selling music. I have to reconcile doing a really professional recording, straddle the line between something that will do well commercially and something I can be proud of musically. I think that being third generation, I'm totally bicultural. I have no problem with either of the cultures, and that kind of makes the music I create something that is bicultural.

If I were to just alter everything I'm doing, and just change course for a crossover, even if I were to make it there, there's no real foundation to support it. I think that it has to be a precedent of events, something to base it on so you can continue what you are doing. The music I am doing is nothing that is not spontaneous. I've got a good feeling for it. I know what works.

There's a little contradiction in trying to do salsa music and heading for the crossover. I think that maybe there's a junction up ahead, but we can't head straight towards a crossover, because people are not ready.

Some of the things that make salsa what it is are not going to allow it to be a mainstream pop kind of bubble-gum music. First, we have the language thing, and we're going to have to address that. Are you going to do salsa in English? Anything can work, but it has to be done organically. It has to be worked out slowly. I've heard a lot of those monstrous experiments, and they lack any kind of coherence or spark.

The crossover I was looking for was I wanted to make salsa a pan-American music.

I've used reggae feelings. When I started mixing all these musics together the veterans started saying, "You can't do this. It's not right. It's got to have a clave, it's this it's that." But I found it worked real good for me. I started writing a kind of bass line that would tie all the rhythms together that would run through the rhythm changes. That kind of helped to give me a different sound,

a different concept. It was good. I was able to make some kind of music that anybody could dance to.

I said, why not? I got into the Brazilian thing because Brazil, they speak Portuguese and not Spanish, they live a segregated life. There is not a flow culturally. And it's a tremendous country. It's so big, and it has excellent music and lyrics, but it doesn't seep through. It doesn't get through to our stuff. So I started translating a lot of Brazilian songs, and bringing in these different chordal modes and stuff.

I felt it was really necessary for the music to evolve and to continue, and I really got tired of these I, IV, V changes. I found that so limiting that I had to change it. It's just part of salsa. Salsa differs from the other things. There are different chord progressions, different rhythms together and the lyrics are not about grass shacks and cows and cutting sugar cane.

So the II, Vs, and the cycle of fifths and stuff. Just breaking up the structure of the music and using the components of it. Using a little chorus and a long verse using the cycle of fifths. It would really knock the people out. And the musicians. I started having jazz guys coming over to see the group, because they thought it was some genius group. We didn't even know what the hell we were doing. A couple of my first records were Latin jazz instrumentals.

I've done stuff about Napoleonic generals, I've done stuff about the nuclear age that got Arabs and Republicans mad at me. With Ruben. Ruben was one of the most political writers that I ever worked with. There were times when Ruben had to wear a bullet-proof vest.

In order for kids to relate to the music, it has to be put into a mainstream format, without losing the honesty or the swing or the purpose of the music. The cavemen used the rock and a stick for a hammer, but we have more specialized tools to do the same job better. Times change, and the music has to be brought up to the twentieth century. That's why I made a small, nine-piece group. It's very electronic. I have some funk and jazz players in it, a good musical cross-section.



## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

West and Central Africa—one of the most volatile places on earth. The first memories most people of my generation have of seeing starving children came out of the Nigerian civil war of the late sixties, pitting the predominantly Yoruba western/coastal part of the country with the seceding Ibo eastern part of the country, calling itself Biafra. Millions died. The country remained under martial rule until the late seventies and returned in 1983 when a coup ousted the elected government. The temptation brought on by the vast amounts of oil and other mineral wealth in the country proved too attractive for those in power and those who wanted to be. Nigeria may be one of the world's most corrupt countries in terms of government.

Yet as rich as the area is in mineral resources, it might be even richer in music. From highlife to juju to fuji to Afrobeat and all the sounds in between, Lagos is a hotbed of music.

Much of West and Central Africa became incredibly turbulent in the sixties as the colonial powers that had “settled” the areas withdrew and the countries tried to come into the modern age of self-government. These growing pains were felt in Senegal, as treaties with Gambia, new alliances, and new borders came and went on what seemed like a weekly basis. Add to this the encroaching desert and you had a massive exodus to the capitals of those colonial powers that had withdrawn. This drew artists like Cameroon's Manu Dibango and the Toure Brothers of Senegal. But some artists, like Youssou N'Dour decided to endure and create an artistic center in Dakar.

Out of this volatility came some of the most amazing music of the past forty years.



## KING SUNNY ADE

*King Sunny Ade is one of the most popular African musicians in the world. A prince of Nigeria's Yoruba tribe, Ade renovates one facet of his tribal music, playing an updated, electrified version of juju music. At times, Ade will cut out all the electric instruments in his eighteen (or so) piece band, which includes synthesizers and a pedal steel guitar, leaving just the talking drums and other traditional instruments playing alone. That, he says, is the genuine article, as real as it gets, Yoruba music is as it has sounded for centuries. Ade first came to the attention of many Americans with an album he made for Island records in 1982. Riding the wave of African rhythms being used by the likes of Talking Heads and Adam and the Ants, juju music became the critics' touchstone for that year, which thrilled Island. They were hoping against hope that Ade might be the successor to Bob Marley as popular musical champion of the developing nations. In a way, they were right. Fans of African music embraced the Nigerian star on his own terms. His shows featured over ten separate drummers, four guitars, bass, and*

*a pedal steel, over twenty people on stage all told. The music they made was quirky and rhythmic, but just not as accessible to the mainstream audience as reggae. Forgetting the years that it took to develop reggae into a major cultural force, Ade and Island severed their relations after distributing three albums over four years.*

I am not supposed to play music, but I do because I just love to play music. Nobody else in my family plays music, except my father. Sometimes plays the organ at church when the organist doesn't come. He is a prince by birth. We are princes, so we can't play music for people, people are supposed to play for us. But as I looked into the Christian way of life, I often look at the songs of David, the psalms. David is a king, and he sings to God. He's a king, I'm a prince, let me try all the things that go along with it.

I started hanging around music because I love to dance, I love to hear music. I've been hanging around musicians since the age of seven.

There are some groups in Africa that are very good, but they don't like to go out. There are some, they don't know the right person to get them out. There are some that can't go out simply because they are under some kind of sponsorship or record contract. There are some that the government doesn't even want to go because they are good. There are groups that are government backed, sponsored. They mainly play within the country. If they want to go out, it has to be between government and government.

That's what we've been doing since 1975. We came to this country in 1975 for the first time. All we've done is cultural exchange. A group will go from Nigeria to America, and a group will go from America to Nigeria. And that's cultural exchange. We have to select the places to go, and when we finish that, whoosh, straight home, you don't need to stop, because your passport and your ticket and everything is with them.

We have thousands of musicians in Africa. There are some that are very good, but if you asked them to go to another city, they would tell you they do not want to go out. There are some who are under some kind of pressure, probably by their sponsors, or their



contract or by the government or by the group's organization. It might also be from within the group themselves. There are some groups that are very, very good, but they are working. They consider music a hobby. And the people would tell them, "You'll make a hell of a lot of money with this music if you send it out." And these artists say "no, no, no." They are not like that.

People like Fela, he goes out when he likes. He doesn't look into what kind of money, or how big, or what kind of programs they want him to do, he goes out when he likes. Me too. Our music is different, so we want to play it around the whole world and at home. It's good to bring your music around the world.

Music in Africa is almost unlimited, because we have serious music almost everywhere. Almost every community has their own kind of music. Some of the languages have their own kind of music, too. And the cultures of different areas have their own kind of music. Then there are some religions that have their own kind of music. Then there are some groups that they don't even believe in anything but playing purely music. There are some that combine Western or African or Asian or Latin together to make one music. It depends on what area but those who are known have the chance to expose their music, they have the privilege to record at a better studio, they have the privilege to go to a show with other big acts where they can be exposed, they have a privilege to be backed by a good recording company or management.

You like to take from one kind of music. For instance, we have light jazz, we have acoustic jazz, we have funk jazz, we have rock jazz, we have blues jazz, and we have rhythm and blues combined with jazz. So it depends on what kind of sound we are producing, but under one name—jazz. Those are the things that people like to relate to when they want to differentiate their music or when they want to find their own kind of identity.

I was listening to Kenny G. He was talking about his saxophone, and how he put his saxophone through some kind of effects, and now he has differentiated his own kind of music. Quickly, you can recognize when you are playing his music. You say, "Is that not Kenny G.?" and they say, "Yes."

When you listen to my pedal steel player, you know that it's a pedal steel, but it doesn't sound like country music, because you expect a pedal steel to be country music, and it's not that. Actually, we didn't use pedal steel until we came over to America. That's the first time we saw the pedal steel. When we saw the pedal steel, we picked it up and bought it. Before, we used a guitar with a slide. And the way we slide, we do it in an African way. We don't actually want to go along with any other music in the world. We want to differentiate our own kind of music. That's why the pedal steel player has a normal time to come in, and he plays a danceable sound. Not really to back the song. Not really to take a solo. He has to play his own kind of solo on a danceable step.

I always wanted to introduce the pedal steel into my music. Then I introduced the keyboard. But I didn't introduce the keyboard for the first time. My ancestors had already introduced the accordion. I just don't like to have an accordion with me, because the people who play the accordion used to stand still at a microphone. With my kind of music you have to dance around, you have to jump up. You can't jump up with an accordion on your chest! That's why I introduced a DX-7 to African music. And with a DX-7 you can find so many sounds, I call it the African tones of the instrument that you can find. If you want to play flute, it's good if you can play flute direct, but inasmuch you can play it on the keyboard, it's more or less the same. The man playing the flute would be playing keyboard any way. So this is the difference where those groups that are trying to fuse African music with Western instruments, but play it in an African way.

Everything in the whole world now goes hand to hand. Everything goes side by side with technology. Even the music itself. Nowadays, it is easier, because you have multitrack, that's part of the technology. With multitracks, taking about twenty-four at the same time, we can go in and if we go in as thirty, and the multitrack is twenty-four, thirty people can go at the same time. You get four people on one track, three on another, and the rest will go on their own track. Then those three or four can go in again. Sometimes the studio can only fit fifteen people at the same time.

So we take all the other microphones out of the studio, and they'll be playing as if they were with us. They have their song to play, and they don't see us, but we feel as if we are on the stage. Later on, we can redub it if we need to.

I put out three albums a year in Nigeria. If I released two, I would be so pressurized. All fans would be sending letters saying "what's going on?" They take their idols to be everything to them. They are expecting that every four months I must produce some different songs that will make them move.

That's the difference between there and here. The distribution network is different. Like, you allow one record that people love to be in so many markets for long before you do another one. At home, the song you played me last night, if you repeat yourself today, and we come to your show tomorrow, and you repeat yourself again, you have to create. It has to be new. These people play music all the time, even in the back yard. They play new music every day. You can't go in there repeating yourself every time. Your fans would be breaking off.

Each time we make a record, and the record goes out, we feel that's unheard music. We feel we have to back it up with something that's better than what we played. In the studio, you have to be very careful to touch your strings. You can't let them touch each other. But when you're on the stage, you have the ability to move, you see a lot of people dancing, you see a lot of hands up there waving at you, a lot of people shouting at you, eventually it makes you play better than what you played. And that is why some people are breaking their strings on the stage. They are so happy, they don't even know. If you don't call them quick, instead of playing eight bars, they'll play twenty-four if you don't call them back. So, eventually, that's why the drummer has to cue them when they play. They have to be called back.

I try my possible best, in every one of my songs, to preach love and unity. I don't like to push politics or try to evolve into a kind of political songs or programs for politics. I try my best to deviate myself from politics. When it's time for election, to vote, I'll look into who has the program and then I'll vote for whomever I feel.

But I don't like to point it out to people and I don't like to preach with songs, because the way we play politics, the little I saw from my teen age until now, is really bitter for my liking.

When I started singing songs, I decided to tell people not to take everything with bitterness. Not only politics. Everything a man is supposed to do, supposed to be, friendly, with love. Unity can never come without inserting the program to combine love together. If you are friends you can study what one another wants, their dos and their don'ts. That is difficult, but gradually it can be done.

I don't see anything in the areas where I can comment on politics, simply because the way they do it is always too bitter for me. Anywhere in the world you can play at a rally, and after that, the campaigner or the aspirant can come to the rostrum and deliver his message. Either they clap for him or they boo him and that's the end of it. But on the occasion, they start throwing stones, and throwing many things, and eventually, you will lose your instruments, even lives are lost, so it's like, I always avoid that. It doesn't appeal to me. I think now, the whole mission now is becoming awareness that it is not good to be bitter.