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The following is a diary I kept between January 2nd to 28th 1977 when I was acting in Fela's biographical film, *The Black President*, co-produced by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Faisal Helwani, Alex Oduro and J.K. Braimah.

I first saw Fela play in 1972 when he came to the University of Ghana Campus at Legon, where I was then an undergraduate. In November 1974 I stayed at his Africa Shrine (Empire Hotel) with members of Basa-Basa and the Bunzu Sounds, the resident groups at Faisal Helwani's Napoleon Club in Accra. Faisal and Fela co-produced two albums we recorded at the EMI studio in Apapa including two Afro-beats I played and composed jointly with the Bunzus. 'Onukpa Shwapo' and 'Yeah Ku Yeah' were later released on the New York Makossa Label as 'Makola Special' and 'Volta Suite' respectively. On the first day of our stay at the Shrine we were teargassed, as Fela's Kalakuta Republic across the road was attacked by sixty riot police trying to retrieve a runaway girl Fela had been harbouring.

I stayed at the Shrine again in December 1975, enroute to visit and play with Victor Uwaifo. It was on this occasion that I did the interview with Fela, parts of which appear in *West African Pop Roots* (Temple University Press U.S.A 1992, chapter 8) and *Highlife Time* (Ananassem Press, Accra, 1996, chapter 38).

I also met Fela on the various occasions he came to Ghana in the mid 1970's and visited Faisal's Napoleon Club, in many ways a Ghanaian outpost of the Kalakuta Republic. After the 1977 Black President trip to Ghana described below, I continued to see Fela. In 1978, during the Colonel Acheampong era he made his famous trip to Ghana after he had customarily married twenty-seven wives - actually a ploy to block Ghanaian immigration officials from denying access to his numerous wives.
female dancers and entourage. Again I met him in Amsterdam in 1981 when he was on tour and releasing ITT (International Thief Thief) - when I helped arrange a press conference for him.

DIARY (Sunday 2nd January, 1977)

Arrived at Kalakuta. Faisal, his Lebanese friend, Victor Azzi (a chef) and the Ghana film crew already here. Fela in his usual pants. All happy to see me. Then Fela dramatically told me that I had to do my part well or my children wouldn’t be allowed to stay in Africa. I was surprised by this bit of melodrama as the two parts in the film for whites, me as inspector Reynolds and Albert (another Lebanese friend of Faisal’s) as the governor of the Elmina slave castle had been picked by Faisal and Fela as insider whites.

Except for a small swimming pool, things much the same at the Kalakuta as before. The monkey at the gate, the donkey in the yard and the big shaggy Alsatian dog Wakolo (go and find prick) still around. The yellow waiting room with its plush lounge chairs, bear-rug and photos of Fela and friends still the same as 1975. But there is a new painting I hadn’t noticed before. Of a group of police attacking the Kalakuta with tear gas and axes and people on the roof throwing rocks and things down on them. This must be the original painting they used on the cover of the Kalakuta Show album. The tiny cushioned ‘session’ room and Fela’s special chair where he held court also as before. He still hasn’t put a door on the adjoining toilet, just the same thin piece of cloth. So presumably he still sometimes holds his sessions and court whilst shitting and farting for all to hear. When I first saw him at the Kalakuta in 1974 he didn’t even bother with the cloth partition so I guess it is some sort of concession to the fact that lots of foreign visitors and journalists are beginning to visit him, who may be upset.

The Ghana film crew did some shots at the Kalakuta and Jackie (Faisal’s Ghanaian Mr Fixer) took me to the Crossroads Hotel, just a few yards from the Kalakuta.

Monday 3rd

Saw a weird sight at the traffic lights at the crossroads near the Hotel. Either the lights weren’t working or no-one was minding them, so a group of policemen carrying whips were trying to control the traffic. At one point a policeman got so infuriated that he began whipping the cars. One poor guy was on a motorbike - so to try and dodge a lashing he accelerated off right into the flow of moving traffic, managing somehow to get across. He presumably preferred taking his chances in a crash rather than a whipping. Victor told me after that Fela’s YAP (Young African Pioneers Organisation) had just distributed half a million broadsheets condemning the giving of horsewhips to traffic police. At the Kalakuta Fela told us that it was a particularly stupid thing to do with the FESTAC coming up. What would black American visitors think of seeing these whippings, it would be like scenes from South Africa, but this time blacks whipping blacks. It would freak the Americans out. Funny enough the Chief Inspector of Police (not the traffic variety) support Fela’s stand. Fela’s now saying that he will do more broadsheets - he’s even bought a press and is going to stand for president. Whether this is due to the popular support for YAP or is something to do with the Black President film - I’m not sure. The line between reality and art often gets blurred at the Kalakuta - reality becomes dramatised and dramas become real.

In the afternoon there was an argument as one of the dancers hit one of the bandsmen. Fela shouted ‘court’ but the dancer ignored him. Everyone worked themselves into a frenzy of excitement and Fela and some others chased her to the front of the house. Someone slapped her and forced her into the session or court room where she was slapped again and fell on me. She was then taken out to the backyard where everyone surrounded her and the bandsmen. Everyone was shouting as they fought, but every time the bandsmen hit the dancer hard Fela said stop, he should only slap her. After the fight Fela called all the dancers and told them not to trouble the bandsmen again or he would allow them to beat them. The rules of the house are that the bandsmen cannot touch the dancers, whatever they do or say, but the dancers were taking advantage of this rule - until today. Then Fela asked if any of the other girls wanted to fight a bandsman. One
promptly volunteered and was slapped and fell on her knees for forgiveness. The dancer who caused the original trouble was also made to kneel and beg for forgiveness from Fela. Much to everyone's enjoyment she was told to clean the toilets.

All this happened in the backyard where the Kalakuta's little wooden Kalakosa jail is situated. Actually its only a symbolic jail locked with string, but if you don't do your penance in it you have to quit the Kalakuta altogether. The whole incident reminds of something that happened in the 'punishment' backyard two years ago. A bald-head dancer who had been moaning and shouting for hours in the Kalakosa was taken out in the yard and surrounded by the Kalakuta residents. She began screaming about at Fela and he, J.K. Braimah and the others began chanting back and clapping their hand rhythmically. Suddenly this abusive call-and-response gelled into a song. Then the whole thing broke-up, the girl became quiet and was left free, and the Kalakuta people went their own separate ways talking excitedly as if they had just seen a stimulating film.

Still the same exciting vibes at the Kalakuta: great music, intense rages, showmanship, violent palavers, bluffing, ego-tripping, unexpected happenings, radicalism, decadence, friendly fierceness - and what Jackie calls a 'bunch of half naked Bohemians.'

Faisal and Victor also at the Crossroads with me. All my food and lodgings paid for and getting 28 naira a day. Going to Abeokuta tomorrow to do my part. Gave my passport to one of Jackie's Ghanaian boys, Nii Papoti to get my passport stamped. Says no problem as he knows some immigration officials. So should be able to leave by Friday.

Wednesday 5th

Now at Abeokuta staying at a hotel near the famous Abeokuta Rock.

Faisal's gone to Rank in London to deposit some of the films already shot. The 23 member Ghana film crew came up in a convoy of three trucks, dolly and 60 KW generator. I came in Fela's VW J.K., Feelings Lawyer (Wole Kuboye), Alex Oduro, Fela's three children, Victor and an Afro-American called A.J. Moreson and some of the Kalakuta artists and house people. Fela drove - he always does - he never allows anyone to drive him on a long journey. Fela in a good mood to be going to his home town and joking around on the road by allowing cars, especially Mercedes saloons, to come behind us and try and overtake. As soon as they were overtaking he put his foot on the accelerator and it became a neck-and-neck race at eighty or ninety miles an hour. This went on until a vehicle came in the opposite direction and the bigman in the Mercedes saw Fela's gleeful manic look and the name of the band painted in psychedelic colours on the side of the bus - and would drop back, as Fela never gave way. He did this about ten times on the journey. The first few times I was petrified. Towards the end I was as exhilarated as everyone else. Being with Fela was giving me the feeling of being with an immortal. No wonder he uses the name 'Anikulapo' which means a dare-devil who keeps death in his pocket.

In the morning went to Fela's old school, the Abeokuta Grammar School, to see the Principal about arranging mine and Feelings' scene. The Principal kept us waiting and when we finally saw him he said the scene was too controversial and he would have to get permission from the Ministry of Education. Fela was furious as he had given a 1,500 naira donation to the school. He threatened to collect the money back and do the scene at his mother's private school, a huge campus-like place that we then went to. Afterward we went to his mother's house (Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti) to discuss the plan, but she didn't like the idea of collecting the money back and said she would try and sort things out with the Ministry by phone. At this point Fela thought that one of his men had insulted his mother - I don't know what it was all about. But suddenly Fela began kicking the guy viciously with his pointed shoes into a corner until his mother stopped him.

After this she phoned up the Minister. She talked to him like he was a small boy, as she is a prominent political figure herself. Anyway, she got the Ministry to at least allow us to shoot the part of the scene where I and Feelings enter and leave the school office. The more sensitive
bit that the Ministry thought would embarrass the British government we'll do in Lagos. One of Fela's girlfriends gave his mother a necklace.

Fela and most of the others went back to the grammar school to inform the Principal, and me and the three children stayed with his mother. We hit it off immediately, I find her a very pleasant and penetrating woman. She showed me some photos of when she was young. Very beautiful and still very striking with her greying short Afro haircut and impeccable English. She was very inquisitive about me and how I came to fall in with Fela. I told her I had been a musician at Faisal's Napoleon Club, had met Fela through Faisal and had stayed at Fela's Shrine twice already.

I also told her I was a science school teacher in Ghana and she asked me to talk about this to the three children, Femi and his two sisters Sola and Yeni. So I sat for a while with them and a large number of dogs in an upstairs room. Sola's fourteen, and Femi and Yeni who are older told me they were born in England. I quizzed them on what they knew of chemistry and physics.

In the afternoon Fela and all of us went around his old school which has an old colonial church or cathedral-like structure. Fela got mad when he noticed that one of the pictures in the assembly room wasn't hung properly. It was askew - and he went into a long diatribe about Africans' never doing anything one hundred percent, but always half-baked, and this was hindering the development of the continent. This was all because one picture was not hung right. Fela also told us about his dad, who had been the Principal of the school when he was a pupil in the 1940's. He said his dad was like an English Victorian, really strict. He also said that his grandfather (Reverend Josiah Ransome-Kuti) was a composer and a preacher who had been responsible for spreading Christianity amongst the Yoruba - and he wanted to undo this and return to 'blackism.'

Wednesday 5th

No shooting today so this morning went to Abeokuta Rock with Lyday (dancer), Shegun (one of Fela's bodyguards) and Oghene Kologbo (African 70 guitarist). It's a rock hill that the town's inhabitants used to flee up in times of war. It's a natural fortress and there's a place where only one person can pass up at a time. If there's people above you stopping it's impossible to pass. There's a huge white cross on top of it.

No water at the hotel and it's a peculiar place. To prevent robberies all the air conditioners are inside the hallway that leads to our rooms. With all the heat being pumped out it's hell going through the hallway and the rooms are not cool - as all the air conditioners do is pump in and out each other's heat.

Another heavy session with A.J. Told me point blank he doesn't like whites and it's a great privilege for me to be here. He's been in Nigeria for one year. He told me that he had been involved in the Detroit riots and that he had been imprisoned and got off hard-labour by working as a clerk in the prison library. Through that he had read all the greats like DuBois, Padmore, Nkrumah and was able to help his brothers. He's a musician.

In the afternoon went with Fela, Victor and some Kalakuta people to Mrs. Ransome-Kuti's. She asked me to continue my private classes with Femi, Yeni and Sola and before I had had time to start Fela burst into the room. I think someone had told him about yesterday. He ordered me to stop and told his kids about the uselessness of school, especially science, maths and English. His mother disapproved of his attitude and winked at me she chastised him and said she wanted her grandchildren educated even if he didn't. She said that I should continue, which I did and Fela left. I think because I'm playing the part of a colonial education officer he actually thinks I'm a colonialist. A lot of playing, acting, bickering and skin-pain goes on at the Kalakuta.

Went roaming around the town with J.K., Victor and a couple of the dancers. J.K.'s a lovely guy, he's been with Fela since the Highlife Rakers days.
Thursday 6th

Morning. Still don’t know when we’re going to shoot. Waiting for official permission from the Ministry of Information.

Evening. Finally got permission to shoot. Fela spent morning condemning a government proposal to ban local private cars during FESTAC, to ease Lagos’s notorious traffic go-slows.

Quite a bunch of Kalakuta people here. Fela, in pants as always, spends a lot of time practising his sax. He has two bodyguards, Oyo (also a driver) and tall bouncy Shegun. Then there’s Sonny who holds his purse and Tunde who is one of his valets. There’s also Steve his personal PRO, Nepa (i.e Nigerian Electrical Power Authority) his electrician, and Feelings his lawyer. The Africa 70 musicians are friendly, especially Kologbo and drummer Tony Allen. The women are rather snooty and standoffish—always complaining they find Abeokuta dull and boring. I’ve only got to know the dancers: Lyday whose an open and thoughtful person, and Shi-Shi whose always looking sad. Then there’s tall Emelia whose quite haughty as she’s Fela’s number one girlfriend—but she’s Ghanaian and I know her from when I was playing with the Bunzus at the Napoleon Club.

Strange conversation with A.J. an hour ago. He told me he was an African mystic and had had four previous lives. Think he was trying to freak me. I giggled in disbelief and then surprised him when I told him I had been living in Africa since 1952, had a Ghanaian step-mother and was running a band in Ghana. Because of the black and white matter that he constantly talks to everyone about we have a prickly sort of relationship. Also I’ve heard he was understudying my part as Inspector Reynolds and that if I hadn’t come he would have acted the role of the white colonial education officer—quite how I don’t know. So he’s a bit annoyed with my coming anyway. Inspite of all this we’re both musicians and we’ve both been thrown together, so quite enjoy getting together chatting about the weird and nutty going on in this place. For instance, this morning on the balcony of the Abeokuta Rock Hotel Fela was blasting one of the dancers for having abused a bandsman. So she was told to kneel down in front of the guy, hold his prick and kiss his arse. She did kneel, but that was all, as at the last moment Fela turned the thing into a joke.

Friday 7th

Me, Feelings and Fela did our scene this morning. Or just the outside shots, as the Ministry of Education only gave the school permission for that. Also the part where I’m actually being beaten by Feelings (i.e playing Fela’s dad) was cut due to Ministry instructions. Anyway, I don’t think that actually happened in reality—it’s a bit of poetic license by the script writer Alex Oduro. So I finally got into my colonial outfit that one of Fela’s valets was looking after and went to Fela’s old school. Fela himself was dressed as a schoolboy pretending to be a prefect. Because the confrontation scene in the school office will be done in Lagos when we get back, the shots were quite short. All I had to do was to walk into the office, run out chased by Feelings waving a cane, and then knock Fela down in my flight. In fact I really knocked Fela hard and he glared at me a bit after. But that’s what he told me to do—he wanted the thing realistic. I just hadn’t taken into account that despite Fela’s huge charismatic person he’s quite lightly built.

After he had dusted himself off and got his wind back Fela was very pleased with the shot. In fact everyone was, except the school principal who was furious as the Ministry had told him no cane was to appear in the scene. Fela and Feelings tricked him. Before getting out of costume, me, Fela and J.K. Braimah had some photos taken in the school compound.

Afterwards we went to Mrs. Ransome-Kuti’s house and as we were going in, Ojo who was driving, carelessly damaged the car slightly. Fela went mad and told the six or seven people with us to beat him. Everyone converged on the hapless Ojo and got in two punches each before Fela stopped them. Sola commented that he was very lucky. After Fela and the others left I stayed and chatted with his mother again. In spite of her being a prominent Nigerian nationalist who had led tax riots against the British in the 1940’s she told me she quite liked the British for being...
gentlemanly. So whereas I have problems with Fela as he sees me as an English gentleman, which is my role anyway in the film, its the opposite with his mum. I told her in fact that I'm only half English as my dad is from Ireland - which was a British colony. I told her about my dad having helped set up the University of Ghana's Philosophy Department in 1952 and now, on his Ghanaian pension, he's gone into farming.

After lunch talked to Feelings. When I told him that Lyday was the only woman with us who was quiet and friendly he told me it was because she quietly drinks half a bottle of whisky a day. He told me she can really do crazy things. Once at Lagos airport when Fela was travelling to Zaire, Lyday dropped her pants and pissed straight onto the carpet of immigration control. The officials raised hell and then she started to abuse them saying that the toilets had been full up and there was a long queue waiting outside. She yelled at them that a modern airport should have more toilets. She caused so much trouble that Fela's departure was almost delayed. Feelings is quite a character, big physically and a lawyer with an artistic streak and great voice. Any time Fela's in a scrape and Feelings can't get him out of jail, Feelings himself sings Fela's part on stage. He did this when I was staying at the Africa Shrine in November 1974. After the Kalakuta was tear-gassed Fela was locked up for a few days and Feelings took over. He knows all of Fela's songs and his voice is identical.

Feelings also told me about the time that Fela got stuck in the United States in 1969. The Musician's Union there wouldn't let him play and he didn't have enough money to get out of the country. It was then that the Afro-American singer Sandra Daniels helped him and introduced him to the Black Panthers which had such a profound influence on Fela. This I know as Fela told me about this when I interviewed him last year.
(Top) Release from detention following the first attack on Kalakuta Republic, Fela returns in bandages addressing fans.

(Below) Fela, John Collins and J. K Braimah on Abeokuta Grammar School compound during the filming of the Black President.
'At the beginning my musical appreciation was very limited. When you played the radio it was controlled by the government and the white man played us what he wanted; so we didn't know anything about black music. In England I was exposed to all these things but in Africa they cut us off. It was after I was exposed that I started using jazz as a stepping-stone to African music. Later, when I got to America, I was exposed to African history, which I was not even exposed to here. It was then that I really began to see that I had not played African music. I had been using jazz to play African music, when really I should be using African music to play jazz. So it was America that brought me back to myself. (Interview 22nd December, 1975, Kalakuta)

Saturday 8th

Spent the evening with 'Alhadji' (J.K. Braimah), A.J. and some of the Kalakuta people being driven around in the VW by Fela in one his magic mystery roaming of the town. Ended up in a disco so went to bed late. Before we went out Fela's older sister came around to the hotel to visit. She's a strong masculine looking woman with some front teeth missing. She was quite drunk and noisy and Fela didn't seem to mind her much. He was playing his saxophone against her booming voice in some sort of anti-dialogue. It's ironical that both Fela's mother and sister are such powerful liberated women. He worships his mother in fact. But Fela himself seems to like very submissive (but volatile) women.

Just struck me as odd that my name in the film, Inspector Reynolds, is the name of my grandparents' family. But far from being colonialist they were working-class Bristolians living in the slums of Bedminster. On my dad's side however (the Irish brand of MacNaughtons) there is a colonial connection. My grandfather was an educationist in the old British Indian Empire. Whatever the case, my playacting yesterday seems to have purged my colonial past as far as Fela is concerned. Seems much more relaxed with me now.

At midday went to say goodbye to Mrs Ransome-Kuti. She knows about the terrible shortage in Ghana, in fact she quizzed me on the situation yesterday. So she's bought me a huge plastic bag of commodities: soap, omo, toothpaste and so on.

Got back to the hotel to find out that poor Ojo had been beaten again. Seems he had brought inferior palmwine to Fela who also suspected him of stealing. So one of the bodyguards had to give Ojo ten dirty slaps.

Going back to Lagos any moment now - in time for tonight's show. Huge argument for the last one-and-a-half hours between Eko (Alex Oduro) and A.J. over the black American comedian Sammy David Junior. Eko saying that even though he's an Uncle Tom he's been giving monies to the black cause. A.J. said his image is derogatory to the blackman, so the money he gives to the Panthers is nothing - just a dash. Both appealing to Fela, who came down slightly on A.J.'s side. Actually, inspite of Fela's blackism philosophy he's not a racist. On the way up here in the VW, A.J. had actually said to Fela that no whites should be allowed to live in Africa. Fela's reply was that's crazy - some whites help the cause and he even has white friends - he mentioned Faisal for instance.

Back in Lagos at the Crossroads Hotel with Victor Azzi. Several incidents on the way down, besides Fela's usual dicing with the death driving. First poor old Ojo was kicked around by Fela when he had to stop for a flat tyre as we drove off. Fela said it was Ojo's job to look after these things. Then as we were passing out of Abeokuta a traffic policeman on a pedestal was unfortunate enough to make a rather vague signal to Fela. He had already gone past when the policeman shouted at him and Fela became so furious that he reversed the VW at speed, right up to the policeman, so their faces were inches from one another. Fela called him foolish and asked whether he was going to be arrested. He also shouted at the amazed policeman that all police are corrupt. The surprised man could only splutter a few words before Fela, who was smoking NNG (Nigerian Natural Grass), blew a huge puff into the policeman's face and sped off. I last saw the bullied man waving his arms about and screaming something about not being god. He or Fela I don't know. Fela is notorious in Nigeria for his open smoking of marijuana. Two years ago he was
arrested and, as the police thought he had swallowed the evidence, he was purged and his faeces analysed. No trace found but his special scientific treatment led Fela to compose 'Expensive Shit.'

This incident with the policeman put Fela into a good humour until we drew up at a petrol station half-way to Lagos. Fela got out to stretch his legs and for some reason called the petrol attendant a monkey - who made a grab for Fela's testicles. Segun jumped out of the van and pushed the boy away - who dashed into the building and came out brandishing a crow-bar. By this time the other attendants had seen the name Africa 70 on the bus and told the boy it was only Fela's way of joking and he should cool down. Fela meanwhile had smartly jumped back into the driving seat and said that he hadn't meant any insult. Everyone laughed as we drove out - except the young petrol attendant who was left fuming and clutching his iron bar.

Just seen Nii Papoti who still hasn't been able to get my passport sorted out. He is a Ghanaian, tall, glasses, owlish looking - been with Fela for twelve years. Told me while I was away one of the Kalakuta girls had attacked him with a glass covered ludo game board. It shattered and he had to have stitches.

Going to Fela's Comprehensive Show tonight - this always begins with Fela and a huge calvacade of people crossing the road between the Kalakuta and the Africa Shrine (Empire Hotel). First Fela pours a libation at the shrine near the Hotel's entrance dedicated to Kwame Nkrumah. Then he joins the band which has already been doing an hour or two warm-up.

Sunday 9th

Spent whole night at the show. Much the same band format as in 1974 and 1975. The stage is T shaped and Fela is out front with his electric piano, flanked by maracas and clips players. The band is stretched out behind him: two trumpeters, tenor and baritone saxes (includes Lekan Animashaun), three guitarists, two seated congo drummers and trap-drum wizard Tony Allen. In between him and the band are six beautiful women chorus singers. He is strict with his musicians and if any makes a mistake or loses concentration he fines them on the spot. In 1974 I actually saw him throw a microphone at a musician during rehearsal. So everyone has their eyes glued on him. One new guitarist was so nervous he spent the whole night chewing his lips. As he plays four sexy dancers perform on the same shrouded podiums that Fela used previously. One is at each corner of the dance-floor and the dancers are silhouetted onto the lace material by coloured lights. Fela controls them with four foot pedals that can turn the podium's light off - which means the dancer should get off as Fela thinks she's tiring. Last night he actually beat one of the dancers for not looking nice enough, when he was taking a break in the dressing room. Then all steamed up and he went out to play.

Fela's Afrobeat is a unique combination of styles. The danceband highlife influence of Victor Olaiya, E.T. Mensah and Ambrose Campbell are there, especially in some of the dance movements, the use of punctuating horn sections and Tony Allen's brilliant web of off beats. In fact yesterday I spent an hour at the corner of the stage just watching him drum. Jazz is there of course, Coltrane, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and also Ghana's Guy Warren (now Kofi Ghanaba) who was playing Afro-Jazz ten years before Fela's Koola Lobitos. In fact I've been told that Zeal Onyia, when he was with Nigerian Broadcasting, complained about Fela borrowing Ghanaba's Afro-Jazz records from the gramophone library and not returning them. Then there's the Brazilian influence. Just listen to 'Water No Get Enemy' or the clips beat of any typical Afro-beat. Not surprising really when one remembers that large numbers of Brazilian ex-slaves settled in Lagos in the last century and brought samba with them. Traditional African features of Afro-beat are found in the pentatonic scales that Fela usually sings and solos in, the call-and-response between voices and horns and the use of the modal harmonic structure of Afro-beat that is based on the movement between two chords, usually a tone apart. Most certainly soul music of James Brown has been an influence, first brought here live in the late Sixties from Sierra Leone by Geraldo Pino's Heartbeats. But I think it was James Brown's radical 'Black and Proud' lyrics that influenced...
Fela more than his music. Because soul uses African-derived call-and-response, modal chords and pentatonic (i.e. blues) scales, some people say Fela copied soul. I think it would be true to say that these musical features of soul rather reinforced Afro-beat's utilisation of traditional resources.

Inbetween songs last night Fela 'yapped' about three matters. He said something about my role in the Black President. How a white actor was willing to come down to help, but was blocked by Ministry of Education and the Principal of Abeokuta Grammar School. He went on to condemn colonial education, including the teaching of English, Maths and science - just as he did at his mum's house a few days ago. He also condemned the government's latest attempt to deal with the traffic for FESTAC. Instead of a complete ban on private cars the government has rather decided to let people only drive on alternative days - depending on whether your car license plate ends in an even or odd number. Fela said what will happen is that the rich will buy two cars, one with the odd and one with even ending number plates.

This afternoon went to the YAP offices with Nii Papoti to type out my newest application for a passport stamp. There was court this evening and Yemi, the boss of the male Kalakuta house people was given twelve lashes of a wire flex on Fela's orders. He was accused of stealing while we had been away. He ran out of the house and was pulled back to receive the whipping. I was surprised as usually a wrongdoer had the option of foregoing a punishment by walking out of the house and never coming back.

Monday 10th

Spent whole day with Nii Papoti in town trying to get my passport sorted out. Roads clear today due to government's new directives concerning private cars. Also rubbish being removed and kiosks being pulled down as part of a big face-lifting operation for FESTAC. We couldn't get re-entry permit so I could go back to Ghana for a few days, sort out things with my school and then come back to finish my scene. So Fela decided I would do my part tomorrow at his brother's Junction Clinic which is located inside the Kalakuta. We wouldn't wait to try and get permission from the Ministry to do the inside shots - but rather do them in Beko's clinic made up like a school office. Fela had Papoti beaten for messing up my passport matter.

Tuesday 11th

Felt feverish this morning so Beko dosed me up with chloroquine. Amazing guy, he is basically running a free clinic for the poor people of Mushin. Did my part with Feelings earlier this evening in Beko's office. But before this happened Fela's valet who had been looking after my costume was slapped on Fela's instructions, as he had allowed my solar top helmet to be crushed. I tried to argue with Fela that there was no problem as I could fix it. Fela told me to keep out of it as it was a house matter. I stuffed paper into the flattened helmet and got it more or less back to its original shape. Here's the actual script between me and Feelings.

Mr. Ransome-Kuti (i.e Feelings).
Inspector Reynolds.
Mr. Ransome-Kuti.
Inspector Reynolds.
Mr. Ransome-Kuti.
Inspector Reynolds.
Mr. Ransome-Kuti.
Inspector Reynolds.
Mr. Ransome-Kuti.

Now Mr?
(on other side of desk) Mr. Reynolds
What can I do for you?
On routine inspection Mr. Kuti.
No.
I wouldn't take much of your time.
No.
But surely Mr. Kuti, I mean I cannot understand...I don't think you have a plausible explanation for your actions.
No.
(furiously) I will not take any more insults from a black.
Mr. Ransome-Kuti. (grabs a cane and raises it)

Inspector Reynolds. Man you’re mad. You must be off your rocker (is chased out of the room by Mr. Ransome-Kuti waving a cane)

Because of the malaria I’m about to go to bed early. Fela and company have gone off to Feelings Lawyer’s house to film a small jazz-combo in the back-yard. J.K.’s involved so I think it’s meant to be of Fela’s early Highlife Rakes or Koola Lobitos band. A.J. is on bass and a Cameroonian guy on electric piano. Now I’ve finished my part, hope to be going back home to Ghana on Thursday.

**Wednesday 12th**

Every morning since we came back from Abeokuta I have joined a line of Kalakuta people collecting their daily allowance from Fela’s purse-man Sonny. I get 28 naira a day. Getting over malaria but weak. Saw my friend Ignace de Souza from last year when I was in Benin City. He’s a Dahomean bandleader I met at Victor Uwaifo’s club. He’s come to greet Fela. Ashela, one of the Basa-Basa musicians came around today, wanted to see Faisal. Ashela was down and depressed as he had been beaten by some area boys and even had his glasses stolen. He said that because of the 1969 Ghanaian Aliens Order (when Ghana suddenly expelled hundreds of thousands of resident Nigerians) some people here don’t like Ghanaians at all. I leant him 5 naira.

**Thursday 13th**

*Morning.* Expecting to go today. Fela’s given up on Nii Papoti so J.K.’s gone to immigration to collect my passport.

*Evening.* J.K. couldn’t get passport, he’ll go tomorrow. This morning when Fela was asleep one of the Kalakuta women was shouting herself hoarse in the backyard, complaining bitterly about something. Then someone poured water on her from an upstairs balcony and she began screaming so loud that Fela was awoken. He ordered her to sweep up the backyard and she became annoyed that she began sweeping maniacally scattering water on everyone around. We all disappeared until she finished. Kologbo came around with an English guy who’s chief cook at the Double ‘O’ Hotel. They’re both Karate experts and go around looking for scrapes.

**Friday 14th**

Faisal back from London - took another bunch of reels to the Rank film deposit. Fela planning to sue the police who attacked the Kalakuta in November 1974. No passport and now no sign of J.K.

**Saturday 15th**

Fela was filmed at the Shrine last night. Opening ceremony of FESTAC today. Watched opening ceremony on T.V. Fela has given instruction that none of his people should have anything to do with FESTAC.

**Sunday 16th**

Some FESTAC visitors and performers beginning to visit Fela. The Ghanaian Afro-rock group Osibisa were here today - as was the Ivorian musician Francois Lougah. Fela very apologetic to me over the delay in my going. Heard that Kologbo had a fight with a soldier, but when he was taken to the army headquarters the chief there who knew him let him go.

**Monday 17th**

Still no J.K. and no passport.
Tuesday 18th

Attempted coup in the republic of Benin today. Still no J.K. and no passport. An Apologetic Fela gave me a forty naira dash and said that J.K. and Nii Papoti had now given my passport to the Inspector Chief of Police, whom they knew. Fela thinks the delay might be because the IGP is up to his ears in FESTAC business. He told me J.K.'s dodging us because of this and also because he borrowed two hundred and fifty naira from Victor which he had gambled away.

The evening Steve, the Kalakuta PRO, told me of a joke story Fela had told him. An Afro-American saxophonist had come to Africa to play to the animals in the jungle - and they had all gathered around him. Then the tiger ate him and when the other animals asked why, the tiger had said because he didn't hear anything. Rather tasteless sort of joke I thought.

Wednesday 19th

Fela rehearsed three numbers in backyard this morning - insulted bass guitarist for being slow. Fela uses the tonic sol-fa system for explaining notes to his musicians. Mrs. Ransome-Kuti watching all the antics from a balcony above. J.K. finally appeared and very apologetic about the delay. Today the part of the Black President where the police attack the Kalakuta in 1974 was filmed. Fela got some of his people to dress up as policemen and make the mock attack.

This filming reminds of the whole incident vividly as I was around when it occurred on that early Saturday morning of November 23rd 1974. I had come by road the day before with members of Faisal's Baso-Basa and Bunzu Sounds band that were, like his earlier Hedzoleh Sounds, experimenting with Afro-fusion music. I was playing the harmonica with the Bunzus - and we were all coming to play at the Africa Shrine and record at Nigeria's first multi-track studio, the EMI one at Apapa. Foisal and Fela were the co-producers.

We got in on Friday staying at the Africa Shrine (Empire Hotel) diagonally opposite the Kalakuta Republic. We all wake up early in the morning complaining of nausea and thought we had all eaten some rotten food the night before. Then we opened the shutters and saw the whole road full of tear-gas - that's what was making us sick - and scores of riot police in blue shirts, tin hats and whicker basket shields were attacking Fela's heavy concrete and barbed-wire fence with axes. Fela and his people were on the flat roof of the two storey Kalakuta throwing down anything and everything they could lay their hands on. In the end Fela was able to temporarily escape by putting a plank across to the top of an adjacent building. The police ransacked the Kalakuta and beat anyone they saw around.

Fela finally gave himself up and spent three days in jail. So Feelings Lawyer had to take over on stage as the show had to go on. The whole incident was over a young truant girl who had run away from home to become one of Fela's dancers. Unfortunately, she was a daughter of the Inspector General of Police of Lagos whom before the attack, had on several times politely sent policemen around to Fela to collect the girl. She didn't want to go and Fela wouldn't let them through the gate - even though they informed him that she was underage. Fourteen years old rather than the seventeen she claimed.

After Fela was released he came back from the court to the Kalakuta with a calvacade of vehicles and ten thousand supporters, causing a major traffic go-slow in Lagos that day. On top of a car outside the shrine he blasted the government to the huge crowd - and again blasted them at his show that night. He actually performed with his arm in a sling and a bandage on his head which he humorously called his 'pope's cap'. He immortalised the whole incident in his 1976 album 'Kalakuta Show' - as usual turning his violent confrontations with authority into music.

Thursday 20th

Rusty Dusty, the manager of the Surulere Night Club and T Fire Band was at Kalakuta today. Very nice intelligent guy. Noticed I was reading a book by Collin Wilson on the occult. Said Fela also had a copy of the book in his library. In fact Fela has hundreds of books on Africa, mysticism.
and music in his private library. I told Dusty I'd never seen the place but had actually contributed to it. Last year I gave Fela an album of old photos of Ghanaian bands that I had been collecting over the years. Alex Oduro was there at the time and he condemned the first photo, from around 1900, which showed a white officer at the head of the Gold Coast Territorial Army regimental brass-band consisting of uniformed but shoeless Ghanaians. Alex said it was a colonial picture - which it was - and should be rejected. Fela rather loved it as he said it represented a part of African history. In fact he became so engrossed in the photo album that I dashed it to him, as it was a spare copy.

**Friday 21st**

Yesterday one of the Kalakuta women disgraced one of our Ghana Film crew - a middle-aged bearded man. He sat down in one of the television chairs in the yellow waiting-room that one of the women had vacated. She wanted it back and he tried to argue. All the young women present mocked him and called him an oldman. Me and Kwese (Faisal's carpenter) just looked on and wondered about their behaviour.

Some French reporters from the French Afro-culture magazine *Mammy Water* in today to see Fela this evening and an increasingly apologetic J.K. took me and Victor to the Gondola nightclub where they were shooting some scenes. J.K. had to pretend he was a young man so he wore a ridiculous unkept and bedraggled Afrowig. It didn't look real at all. It looked like a mop. It took five hours to shoot the three of four minutes of action.

Musings on the behaviour of the sixty members of the Kalakuta household. Melodramatic, neurotic, cathartic, very involved and immediate, direct, little fore-thought or meditation, mixture of bluff and bullshit - only those who take will receive. When not arguing everyone bouncing around with joy-even after a beating. All huddled together at the kalakuta and interacting to the fullest extreme. Everyone supremely self-confident, but lots of friction and skin-pain between them. Much stupidity and hurt, but much of it dramatic overstatement. Everyone's a born actor. As Shakespeare said 'all the world's a stage.'

**Saturday 22nd**

Faisal's back from London. Fela's run out of money so he's going to Decca to record so he can get an advance on royalties from them. They've spent 50,000 naira extra due to delays in the film. Fela didn't bother to get permission from the Port Authorities, Ministry of Education, etc before shooting. So that's what's holding them up. Faisal complaining about Kalakuta disorganisation and how in his contract with Fela he made a clause that makes Fela pay any extra bread after a certain date. Film was meant to have been finished two weeks ago.

On TV for FESTAC the Trinidadian band Mighty Canary that contains a member of parliament, a steel band from Guyana called the Invaders led by a Minister and Osibisa who had problems with poor equipment. Best so far a traditional dance group from Tanzania.

Before tonight's Comprehensive Show an American gospel singing group led by a fat grey-haired Afro-American woman came to visit Fela. They were in for FESTAC. She is completely freaked out when she saw a cripple who does an acrobatic floor-show and odd jobs for Fela. He has two withered forearms that come to points like very long fingers and he offered the old lady his hand to shake. She nearly fainted and hurriedly left leaning on two of her people. I've seen this guy do this to unsuspecting people on several occasions. Fela gets a great laugh out of their shock of course.

**Sunday 23rd**

Comprehensive Show started last night with Fela's musical machine slowly put together and warming up. Songs always begin with the clips (claves) and maracas, followed by the bass and percussion and then horns - all fitting together in the end like a jigsaw puzzle of sound. Then the trumpeter Tunde Williams plays some pentatonic solos with the female chorus - and after twenty
minutes or so Fela comes on stage. As soon as he's ready he nods to a young man waiting on the wings of the stage, who gracefully leaps in to clip the sax on Fela. Fela waits patiently, not moving a muscle, until the microphone is adjusted and everything is set. Then one, two, three the band really takes off for up to an hour of solid groove. All his sins are forgiven by those who are held spell-bound by his musical magic.

Yesterday he played 'Upside Down' a song about the disorganised state of things in Africa. He composed it with the black American vocalist Sandra Isidore Daniels. And 'Yellow Fever' which pokes fun at Nigerian women who use skin lightening creams. Both these he recorded last year, so I was surprised to hear them live, as Fela usually doesn't play a song he's recorded.

Maybe it was because of the FESTAC visitors being around?

In his in-between song yapping he blasted Muslims, as he saw an Alhadji in the audience. He said that with 160,000 Nigerian Muslims going on the Hadj and taking 1000 na'ira each with them they were draining Nigeria of cash. Last night he also blasted FESTAC and called the organisers rogues. He said that on the first day of FESTAC the two hundred specially bought buses were collected by their drivers who completely disappeared. He's even bringing out a YAP (Young African Pioneer) brochure on the subject.

Lyday told me that at last week's filmed show he also blasted the Pope and said the Italians should drop the Catholic Church being a state religion.

Fela is the original adolescent rebel who always wants to confront authority - and likes dabbling in politics. I'm just remembering what he told me last year when I asked him whether he was a political artist.

'Yes, the political part of it is a necessity. I don't see how African music today can be about what doesn't affect our lives now. Our music should not be about love, it should be about reality and what we are up to now. You see, if you want to love in Africa we have so many women - so you don't need it (i.e. romantic songs). Even our music before was for purposes like religion, work and politics. So Afro-beat is an occasion for politics because that is the occasion we are in now - people are suffering. (interview Kalakuta Republic 22nd December 1975).

Last night the crowd was so great that the Shrine was packed tight. Fela is really popular. Anywhere he goes in public he goes with a huge entourage and people shout his name. Even when he crosses the short distance across the road from the Kalakuta to the Shrine to start a show.

Towards the end of this famous Jamaican's reggae session Fela and his entourage arrived in a calvacade of cars. When Fela entered the stadium some of the crowd spotted him, gave him the black power salute and carried him on their shoulders down to the grass field where the massive stage was situated. When everyone realised he was around the whole audience deserted the stage area and charged en mass around the field with Fela on their Shoulders. Jimmy Cliff realising the audience had gone shrugged his shoulders and mumbled something into the mike about now that Fela's here we might as well close the show. The show ended like that.

**Monday 24th**

Fela's electrician Nepa wounded in the arm by a bayonet. Happened in an incident I saw the beginning of when coming back to the Crossroads Hotel from the Shrine, after last Saturday's comprehensive show. There was an accident between a car and a motorbike and all the car people began to beat the bike rider - and then some of the soldiers from the nearby barracks came. I didn't see the rest but somehow Nepa got involved.

Spent most of the day in the Hotel with Faisal, the Ghanaian crew, Victor, Ashela, Jackie and E.T. Mensah who is currently doing a second album of his old 1950's highlife hits for Faisal. Nii Papoti came to report that still no success with the IGP over my passport - and now also Victor's. Said the reason for the delay was that Fela was protecting a West Indian whom Immigration wanted out of the country. Therefore Immigration and the IGP were holding mine and Victor's...
passports until further notice. Yesterday at the Kalakuta Nii Papoti got beaten by J.K. who was vexed over him asking for 100 naira from Fela, Faisal and Victor to get the passports - with no results. Accused him of chopping the previous money.

**Tuesday 5th**

Nii Papoti meant to come around early this morning to take me to the IGP. Didn't turn up. Jackie very annoyed. Rusty Dusty came around jokingly arguing with Faisal as usual. Amoah Azangoe turned up today. He's the Fra-Fra Calabash player who plays with Faisal's Basha-Basa Sounds. Amoah's chief up in the north of Ghana is quite famous as he appeared jamming with Harris and McCann's modern jazz group in the film of the Soul to Soul concert held in Accra's Black Star Square in March 1971. A funny incident concerning Amoah occurred when we (ie. Basha-Basa and Bunzu bands) were doing the recording session at EMI here in 1974. Because it was the first time we had all gone into a multi-track studio Faisal wanted Amoah to do his singing and calabash playing for Basha-Basa separately. He tried singing without the calabash - it didn't work. He tried playing (really a sort of complex juggling) the calabash alone - it didn't work. Faisal got more and more frustrated until Fela (who was co-producer) told him he should use two microphones and let Amoah do things naturally. Which is how it was done.

Heard today more about the West Indian who's blocking our passports. He's a Trinidadian whom Immigration wants to see for some reason. He was brought in on Fela's FESTAC quota of seventeen visitors and journalists. Unless Fela produces the guy, Immigration won't give him our passports.

This evening went to Bobby Benson's Caban Bamboo with Faisal, Victor, Feelings Lawyer and two Afro-American women. First Bobby Benson's son, Tony played - mainly soul and funk. Then Bobby did a crazy floorshow singing and humming silly songs.

Didn't see Fela today. He needs more bread so was at the Decca studio the whole day recording a new song 'Sorrow Tears and Blood.' Saw Yemi his Kalakuta household boss. Really quite a tough, brutal looking guy. He went off to buy another car for Fela with the advance on royalties that Fela's getting.

**Wednesday 26th**

Good music last night at Caban Bamboo - especially the Northern Pyramids from Kaduna who play Hausa Afro-beat. Some members of the South African Ipi Tombi cultural group who were present got up and sang a couple of soft melodic songs. Then a magician in dreadlocks and looking like a criminal stuck cigarettes into his ears and nose. Lot of people around. Faisal was announced to the audience by Bobby Benson and had to take a bow.

Fela still not around. Still doing his recording.

E.T. Mensah and the Osibisa guys here this morning. Osibisa not happy about FESTAC equipment, so sending to London for their P.A. system. Faisal told us that the problem was that the amps that the FESTAC organisers had brought were American 110 volts types. And they forgot to bring the stepdown transformers. I met the Osibisa conga player Kofi Ayivor and had an interesting chat with him. Told me that he used to live in Temple House where I'm now living. Its in James Town, Accra and he was there when the daughter of the famous Ghanaian lawyer Hutton-Mills, who built the house in 1890, was still alive. The daughter herself was a concert pianist. We were both musicians. Me and Kofi were struck by the coincidence. Temple House seems to like musicians.

Rusty Dusty came in later condemning Faisal as usual. So Faisal accused him of promoting foreign music like reggae in his club and band. Dusty had actually come to find out about the shots tomorrow at his Surulere Night-Club - which was where Fela's original Africa Shrine (Afro-spot) was.
Thursday 27th

Went to Kalakuta with Faisal and Victor. A lot of argument going on amongst household. Nii Papoti again blasted by J.K. over the passport matter. About twenty people were dressing up in police uniforms for the Surulere shot which was going to reconstruct a police raid on the place. Me and Victor went in the bus with these baton holding ‘police.’ Our crazy driver, when we were turning right, cut the corner too sharp, nearly pushing a car that was trying to overtake on the inside onto the pavement. Unwisely, the car driver jumped out of his car and ran across the corner - as we were in a go-slow - and began to hit our driver. As we moved off all our mock policemen put there batons outside the window and hit the poor man in turn. So we left him lying on the ground. He must have been mad to single-handedly attempt to fight a busload of police.

At the nightclub Dusty was busy putting up posters. Bas, one of Fela’s seven girl-friends was there waiting for Fela. While waiting had a drink. Victor told me that before one of the mock police-attack scenes of the Black President film, Fela got some of the ‘police’ and some of the crowd being raided to step forward and slap each other. This made everyone so annoyed that a real fight happened. So Fela got a realistic riot scene. Method acting’s got nothing on Fela’s technique. Fela never showed up so tonight’s scene wasn’t filmed. If it had been may be I would have seen another ‘real’ riot.

From Surulere me, Faisal, Victor and J.K. went to the Caban Bamboo. Again resident band not very good but a nice ‘fetish’ act by a dancer called Rose and an orgasmic one by a singer and sexy dancer to a Congo song. Papoti finally got my passport!

Friday 28th

This morning said goodbye to Fela who thanked me for doing my part. Faisal and Victor stayed on. Me, Jackie and Ashela came back to Ghana this morning by road. On way to Temple House passed my School (GIS) and found out a rumour had gone around that I had been killed in Nigeria. I had told my headmistress, Mrs Acquah, that I was only going for five days. Ended up as nearly a month!

Immediate Aftermath: Destruction of Kalakuta and Black President Film

On the 16th February Faisal left Nigeria having completed the film and deposited 128 cans of 35mm film with Rank in London. The sound-track was left with Fela to mix in his Kalakuta sixteen-track recording studio.

At 11 O’clock of the morning of February 18th the Ghana Film Crew completed packing its equipment and left for Ghana by road.

At exactly the same time one of Fela’s drivers accidentally knocked down a lance-corporal driving a motor bike. Some soldiers came around to the Kalakuta to see Fela and ask him to let them have the driver to charge him with careless driving. Fela refused. A little later some officers came to make the same request. Fela in pants standing above them on the balcony surrounded by a group of scantily dressed women holding an umbrella above him abused them - and started playing Zombie on his saxophone. The officers left furious, after questioning his right to name his house a republic. They said there was only one republic as far as they were concerned and that was the Nigerian one.

At three O’clock in the afternoon hundreds of soldiers attacked and burnt the house, destroying Fela’s Library, recording studio and sound-track of the film - as well as Dr. Beko Ransome Kuti’s Junction Clinic. Anyone in the house at the time was beaten up and the animals were killed. Seventy-seven year old Mrs. Ransome Kuti was tossed out of a second storey window by a soldier. One of Fela’s bodyguards, Shegun, was wounded in the stomach with a bayonet. The African-American A.J. Moreson was clubbed over the head and lost his memory for months. A French magician and snake-charmer who just happened to be visiting at the time had a finger cut off by a soldier. Fela was beaten unconscious and hospitalised. Later he was charged with using the word republic for his Kalakuta, in defiance of the Nigerian Constitution.
A few months after the attack Fela, his band and the usual large entourage came to Ghana to try and re-do the sound track of the film. Some parts that were scripted (like mine and Feelings) we were able to do at the Ghana Film dubbing theatre. However, because of synchronisation problems it was impossible to dub the shots of the band playing. Also many of the scenes, like the riot ones, had been improvised on the spot and no-one could remember their lines. So the 4.5 million naira film couldn't be completed.

Mrs. Ransome Kuti had come along with Fela. She had become quite frail, completely white-haired and very vague and confused. She couldn't recognise me at all. She died a little later in Lagos. Fela deposited a coffin, representing hers, outside President Obasanjo's seat of government at Dodan Barracks. Fela later released an album on the subject called 'Coffin for Head of State.'

**Fela in retrospect: A Musician, a Warrior**

Fela has done two remarkable and unique things in his life. Firstly, single-handedly he has created with his Afro-beat, a major genre of African popular dance-music that has influenced numerous African artists and is now an important component of international 'World Music.'

Also he had a fighter or warrior spirit reflected in his music and lifestyle. Some of this I have already touched on in the preceding diary. As his life after 1977 is well documented I will just mention a few relevant points.

In 1977 he set up a political party called Movement of the People (MOP) and attempted to stand for President in the elections that led to a return to civilian rule. He was disqualified on account of him not having branches of MOP in every Nigerian state. In 1984 he was jailed for five years on spurious currency charges. Amnesty International became interested in his case and he was released after two years when the Nigerian authorities apologised. Whilst in prison his son Femi took over his father's band - renamed Egypt 80. Also right up to his death he continued to play at his new Africa Shrine in Ikeja, Pan-African and anti-establishment songs, and songs in support of the downtrodden 'sufferheads.'

So I call Fela a 'musical warrior' as he has drawn on the age-old connection between music and violence. Unlike so much romantic Western music that sentimentalises life and love, Fela drew on the warfare side of music. The West has its brass-bands and route-march songs to whip up patriotic bravery - with the drum and bugle in the old days actually being used for signalling during battles. Likewise in traditional Africa there were war dances, battle songs and the talking drums and horns used for communication.

This seems to have been what Fela drew inspiration from. And if there was not enough confrontation to create a song - he would have a confrontation first - which ended him up in direct battle with the Nigerian government on many occasions.

In his work went much further than any other internationally recognised protest songster, like Bob Dylan, James Brown and Bob Marley. Their confrontations with authority are couched in more general and indirect terms: 'The times they are a-changin', 'Say it loud I'm black and proud' and the evils of 'Babylon.'

Fela's Afrobeat songs are not just protest but actually often attack specific areas and agencies of the Nigerian establishment. 'Coffin for head of State' was directed against President Obasanjo, 'International Thief Thief' was directed against the American ITT company that had set up a telecommunications system in Nigeria, 'Alogbon Close' was about the the CID Headquarters in Lagos, and 'Zombie' made a caricature of the Nigerian soldier and army mentality.

When all the dust has settled concerning Fela's contrary, promiscuous and rascally egoistical life-style, his Afro-beat groove will live on. And he will always be remembered as the most radical and direct musical spokesman of the African poor. It is difficult to imagine anyone taking his place. The pepper in the African soup will be sorely missed.

6th Sept. '97