Fela: Life And Times Of An African: The Life and Times of an African Musical Icon
by
Matt Morris
Synopsis

Why black people suffer today
Why black people don't have money today
Why black people haven't travelled to the moon today
THIS is the reason why:
We were in our homeland, without troubles
We were minding our own business
Some people came from a faraway land
They fought us and took our land
They took our people as slaves and destroyed our towns
Our troubles started at that time
Our riches they took away to their land
In return they gave us their colony
They took our culture away from us
They gave us their culture which we don't understand
Black people, we don't know ourselves
We don't know our ancestral heritage
We fight each other every day
We are never together at all — THAT is why black people suffer today

Musician, political critic, and hedonist, international superstar Fela Anikulapo-Kuti created a sensation throughout his career. In his own country of Nigeria he was simultaneously adulated and loathed, often by the same people at the same time. His outspoken political views and advocacy of marijuana smoking and sexual promiscuity offended many, even as his musical brilliance enthralled them. In his creation of afrobeat, he melded African traditions with African-American and Afro-Caribbean influences to revolutionize world music. Although harassed, beaten, and jailed by Nigerian authorities, he continued his outspoken and derisive criticism of political corruption at home and economic exploitation from abroad. A volatile mixture of personal characteristics—charisma, musical talent, maverick lifestyle, populist ideology, and persistence in the face of persecution—made him a legend throughout Africa and the world. Celebrated during the 1970's as a musical innovator and spokesman for the continent's oppressed masses, he enjoyed worldwide celebrity during the 1980's and was recognized in the 1990's as a major pioneer and elder statesman of African music. By the time of his death in 1997 from AIDS-related complications, Fela had become something of a Nigerian institution.

In Africa, the idea of transnational alliance, once thought to be outmoded, has gained new currency. In African-America, during a period of increasing social conservatism and ethnic polarization, Africa has re-emerged as a symbol of cultural affirmation. At such a historical moment, Fela's music offers a perspective on race, class, and nation on both sides of the Atlantic. As Professor Veal demonstrates, over three decades Fela synthesized a unique musical language while also clearing—if only temporarily—a space for popular political dissent and a type of counter-cultural expression rarely seen in West Africa. In the midst of political turmoil in Africa, as well as renewal of pro-African cultural nationalism throughout the diaspora, Fela's political music functions as a post-colonial art form that uses cross-cultural exchange to voice a unique and powerful African essentialism.

What people say about this book

Boooooooom. Is. Life and love!, “Yeah-Yeah!!!. Arrived as described with a few lines highlighted... overall I'm super happy and excited to read this great perspective on Fela, through the lens of the Ethnomusicologist Michael Veal!!!”

F. W. Young, “Surprisingly Good. Fela was a true artist - a man committed to his music, who was intelligent and aware enough to see the disgrace of what his country had become. Despite beatings, arrests and the murder of his mother, he simply refused to remain silent about what was going on in Nigeria and Africa. But if his music was merely okay, he'd be a footnote in music history. As it was, Fela produced some of the most challenging, abrasive, rhythmic and simply awesome music ever produced. I thought that it would be impossible for a book to capture and explain this truly wild soul - but this one did a very good job. Amazingly, it began life as an academic paper. "Amazingly" because it is vibrant, detailed and completely entertaining.”

The book by Matt Morris has a rating of 5 out of 4.1. 12 people have provided feedback.