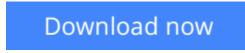


Rumba on the River: A History of the Popular Music of the Two Congos

Gary Stewart



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There had always been music along the banks of the Congo River—lutes and drums, the myriad instruments handed down from ancestors. But when Joseph Kabasele and his African Jazz went chop for chop with O.K. Jazz and Bantous de la Capitale, music in Africa would never be the same. A sultry rumba washed in relentless waves across new nations springing up below the Sahara. The Western press would dub the sound soukous or rumba rock; most of Africa called in Congo music.

Born in Kinshasa and Brazzaville at the end of World War II, Congon music matured as Africans fought to consolidate their hard-won independence. In addition to great musicians—Franco, Essous, Abeti, Tabu Ley, and youth bands like Zaiko Langa Langa—the cast of characters includes the conniving King Leopold II, the martyred Patrice Lumumba, corrupt dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, military strongman Denis Sassou Nguesso, heavyweight boxing champs George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, along with a Belgian baron and a clutch of enterprising Greek expatriates who pioneered the Congolese recording industry.

Rumba on the River presents a snapshot of an era when the currents of tradition and modernization collided along the banks of the Congo. It is the story of twin capitals engulfed in political struggle and the vibrant new music that flowered amidst the ferment.

For more information on the book, visit its other online home at <u>rumbaontheriver.com</u>—an impressive resource.

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