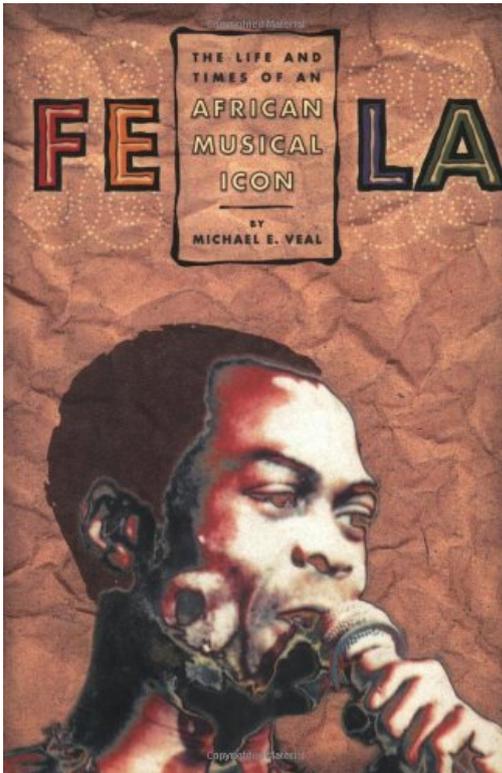


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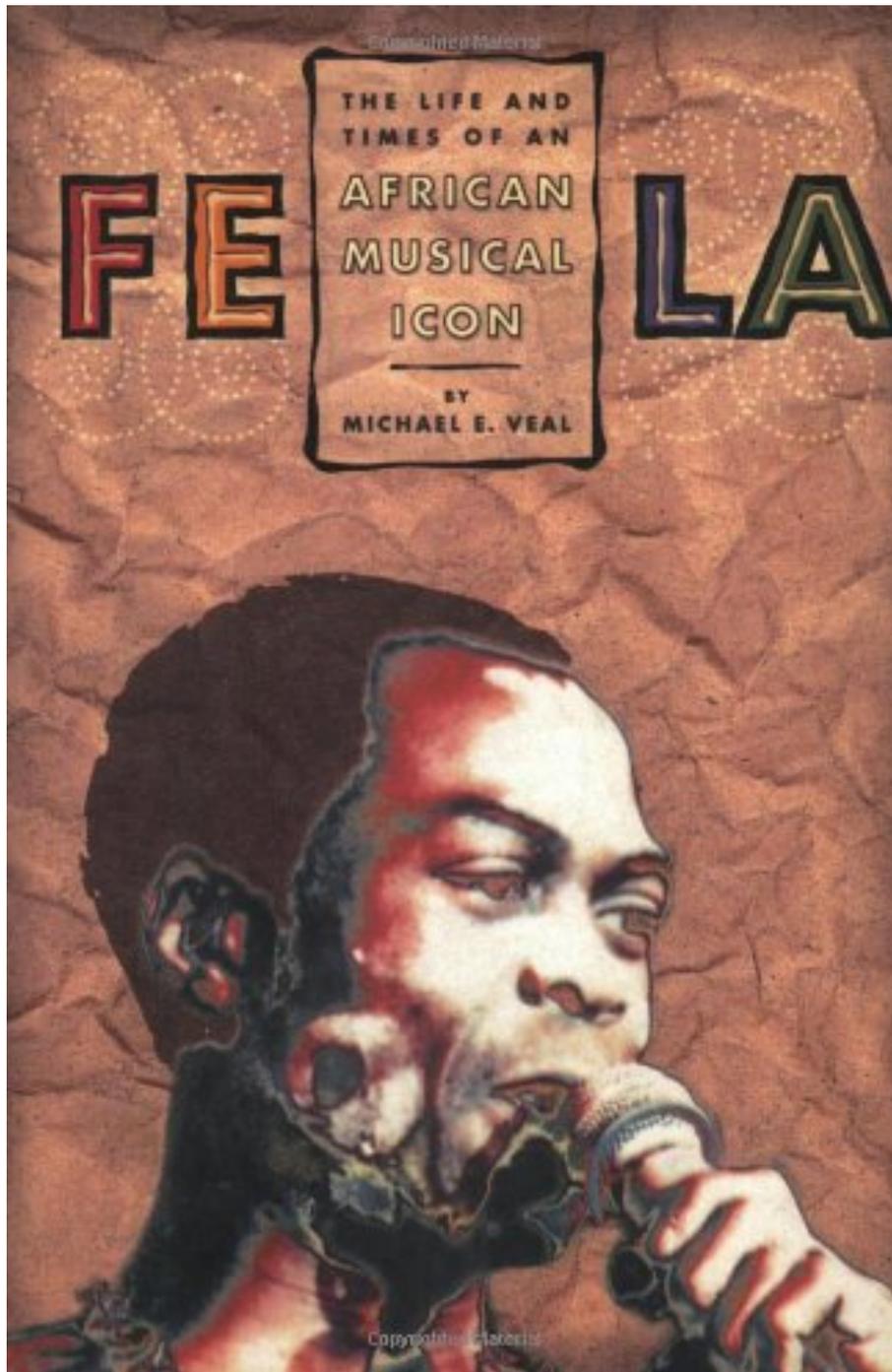
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From Publishers Weekly

Raucous, uninhibited and proud, Fela was one of Africa's most intriguing personalities, for his controversial public persona as much as for his music. It's difficult to say for what Fela, born Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, was best known: his band publicized Afropop in the 1980s; he repeatedly spoke out against unfair politics in Africa and abroad; his life was abundant with drugs and sex. This exhaustive and objective profile, written by a Yale ethnomusicology professor, examines the Nigerian superstar's life and work from 1938 to his death in 1997. Veal traces Fela's roots to the diverse town of Abeokuta, noting the musical influences left by family and community members there. Following a typically mischievous childhood, Fela pursued an education at Trinity College of Music in London. Soon he and his orchestra were touring the U.S. under the name Nigeria 70, developing the new sound of Afropop. Although the tour was not a popular breakthrough, their subsequent return to Nigeria placed them on the budding African music stage. The book goes on to survey Fela's life at home and worldwide, detailing his imprisonment and physical abuse, his performances, his listeners' reactions and his compositions. Fela covered political corruption, mysticism, frustration with Western views on Africa and other significant subjects in his music, all the while continuing a sexually promiscuous life. Veal has taken on the staggering task of portraying a musician/politician/rebel, and he executes it well.

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From Library Journal

Fela was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, in 1938 into an upper-middle-class family whose members included several well-known educators and religious figures. In 1958, he was sent to London's Trinity College of Music, where he discovered Charlie Parker and John Coltrane and soon formed his own band, Koola Lobitos. Over the years, he developed a jazz-funk fusion style dubbed Afrobeat. Little known in America, Fela recorded dozens of albums and became an international superstar with a social and political conscience. His blistering attacks on Nigeria's corrupt military government landed him in jail, in exile, and in danger of losing his life. Veal (ethnomusicology, Yale) became interested in Fela nearly 20 years ago as a student at Boston's Berklee College of Music. Extensive notes, a comprehensive bibliography, and a discography reflect the book's scholarly credentials. This is an important work on world music's most influential figure since Bob Marley, but most cost-conscious libraries will want to purchase the paperback edition. DDan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L., Federation, Curwensville, PA

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Review

"Fela: The Life and Times of an African Musical Icon is both timely and bold... [It] has the potential of becoming a classic of African biography. It is written in an accessible style, rich in local color and musically informed... Veal's study is not the first book written of Fela. But it is by far the best." -Veit Erlman, Chair of Music History in the School of Music, University of Texas, Austin "I saw Fela perform in Nigeria nearly 30 years ago, and it remains my most powerful musical experience to this day. Michael Veal has written a fully comprehensive book on the life, music, and times of Nigeria's outstanding pop star, one which brings this complicated and controversial man back to life. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in Fela." -Dr. John Collins, Professor of Music at University of Ghana, Legon, and author of *Musicmakers of West Africa* and *West African Pop Roots* "[Veal] has demonstrated a tremendous command of the literature, not merely on Fela and the Nigerian music scene, but the Nigerian context in which Fela grew and matured, the Afro-Diasporic musical context, and the kind of global/world music framework that has yet to appreciate Fela's contribution. This is more than a biography of one of Nigeria's most famous sons, it is a biography of an era, from the kind of pre-independence political and aesthetic culture of an anti-colonial elite through the trials and tribulations of the dictatorships of the late '80s and all of the '90s. Veal's command of the material is impressive, his knowledge of the music and music scene irreplaceable, and his contextualization of Fela's life essential to understanding the role that his music played." -William Eric Perkins, editor of *Droppin' Science* and Senior Research Scholar with the African American Literacy and Culture Project "This is a well-written, well-researched, and highly entertaining biography." -MultiCultural Review "...a fascinating and thorough contextual biography...in his compelling book, Veal has produced a distinctive and thoroughly engaging analysis of afrobeat and its historical, ideological and material underpinnings. He is to be congratulated." -Popular Music "This exhaustive and objective profile, written by a Yale ethnomusicology professor, examines the Nigerian superstar's life and work from 1938 to his death in 1997...Veal has taken on the staggering task of portraying a musician/politician/rebel, and he executes it well." -Publishers Weekly "...the most in-depth portrait so far." -The Utne Reader "Michael Veal's book presents a vibrant multifaceted portrait of, as the subtitle explains, 'an African musical icon'... With its exhaustive discography, archival photos, and vivid descriptions of Fela's life in performance-both on stage and off-this book provides a fantastic primer on one of the more intriguing musical personalities of the twentieth century." - Ethnomusicology

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