

# Throwback: Fela Kuti-Zombie



Fela Kuti's "Zombie" album was a political firebomb driven by his distaste for the Nigerian government. The simmering rhythms, jazzy funky horns and Fela's chants validated and incited the people at once even causing a riot in Ghana which got him banned from the country. His Afrobeat style of music, co-created with drummer Tony Allen, was heard in America on public radio. He grew a following in the United States that would allow him to play alongside Bono, Carlos Santana and the Neville Brothers at Giants Stadium in New Jersey for an Amnesty International concert in 1986. But in 1977 in his home of Nigeria "Zombie" caused the Nigerian military to burn down his Kalakuta Republic commune and throw his mother from a window causing fatal injuries. The heat felt in the James Brown-influenced funk was tangibly present in Fela's life and he was adamant about his criticism of the government. "Zombie" is one of Fela's most important compositions for its innovative use of various styles to make a kind of global funk and the example he is of how the artist can be a political catalyst. Fela stopped releasing new music in 1990 but continued to speak on his support for human rights, a democratic Africa, Pan-Africanism and socialism. Since Fela Kuti's passing in 1997, there have been a number of exhibitions on his life. There was the off-broadway play about him called *Fela!* and the Alex Gibney documentary *Finding Fela*. His youngest son Seun Kuti records and tours with his former band Egypt 80.Â

<https://youtu.be/Qj5x6pbJMyU>