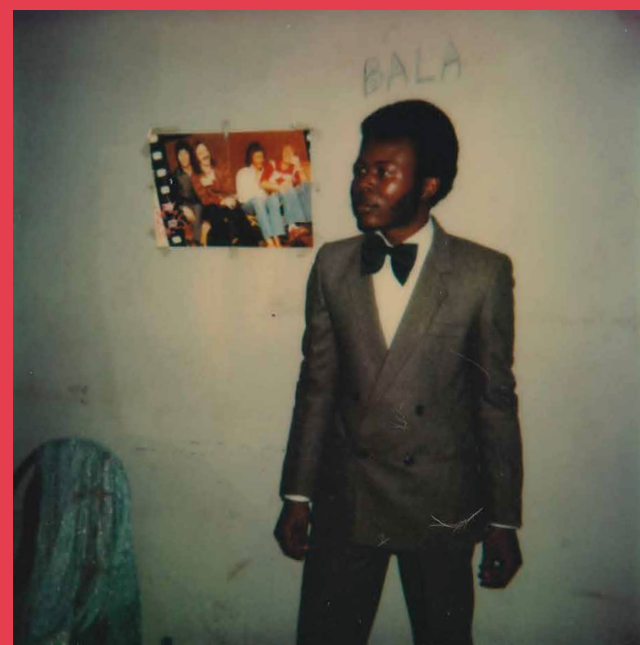


In the 70s/early 80s, Lagos was a hub for musicians from all over West Africa (Cameroon, Benin, Niger, Togo, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, South Africa, Ghana). The capital had labels, studios, opportunities for gigs and a huge local market for music.

“The label owner, Mr Patrick invited me to Lagos to work on this project, at the time, I was playing at the Presidential hotel in Enugu with some of my friends from Cameroon. Mr Patrick rented a flat for the band in Bariga, a popular area on the mainland area of Lagos, and we started work. N'draman would come over and we would rehearse the songs. He was a very heavy intellectual, involved in student politics, who had struck up a friendship with the label owner in Monrovia. Mr Patrick was a wholesaler of jeans and had an outlet in Monrovia. We wrote the music interactively, he had his lyrics, what he wanted to say and we built songs around that”.

“My role was similar to that of a producer, so I was surprised to learn that Harry Mosco produced the album. The creative direction of the album and the arranging of the songs was my responsibility. But it was very interactive: Blintch had some ideas, I had some ideas, Paul the keyboard player also...”¹



JUSTINTCHATCHOUA, 19XX

The heavy funk workout of the Cosmic-Disco classic, “Self Destruction” makes the album a holy grail for a lot of DJs, its 4/4 time signature and Cosmic-Disco sound with the trippy back ground vocals and militant riffs, makes it an easy mix with the house music club sound. The cultural importance of this record cannot be over-emphasised. There is no comparable record from that era that pushes African self-determination and an African agenda that is purely African like this record.

The genius of Blintch and his collaborators was to channel his ideas through monstrous, drums-heavy, experimental, Disco Boogie arrangements, which transformed the work into a timeless piece of global music culture, and has made the album a must-have for DJs and Sound Curators worldwide.

The backbone of the songs was already there when the project was handed over to Harry Mosco, whose role was probably to finesse it and iron out the



N'DRAMAN BLINTCH

2 — Gooseberry Studios was located in the basement of a dentists' practice in Soho's China Town active from the 1970's to the early 1990s. By 1976 the studio had gone 16 track bringing in the newly released Soundcraft Series 3 desk and an Ampex tape machine. Jake Sollo, LKJ and Dennis Bovell also frequented the studio.

Harry Mosco chose two session vocalists: Carol Kenyon and Sonia Jones. For “Self Destruction”, he fades Ndraman’s vocals to the background and Carol and Sonia swap vocalist roles in a very dynamic call and response. The interesting thing is they sing in a “French African accent” pronouncing the words like Ndraman originally did. This retains the song’s original quality and takes the song somewhere else in an interesting way. It also shows that Mosco was not doing cut and paste production. The combination of freaky vocals, sound effects and keyboard breaks and changes on the disco tracks makes Cosmic Sounds a very rewarding listening experience. Carol Kenyon went on to greater things featuring and singing for Van Morrison, Chris Rea, Kris Okotie, Chris de Burgh, Spandau Ballet, Liza Minelli etc.

He also added another keyboardist, Lemmy Jackson and Gasper Laval on the percussions. It is noteworthy that Harry Mosco produced his Peace and Harmony album (released by Samba in 1979) at the same studio with Lemmy Jackson on the keys. He later licensed it to Cosmic Sounds (1980).

Three of the four songs presented on the album are Disco Boogie songs of the highest calibre (Self Destruction, Essika Ti, Cosmic Sounds). It is rare that you find an original Cosmic Disco record from 1980 (the year of the emergence of Cosmic Disco) called “Cosmic Sounds”. The three disco tracks on the album all have the attributes of what is referred to today as Cosmic Disco (as defined by Daniele Baldelli’s sets at the eponymous nightclub); weird synthesizer sound effects, long

Instrumental parts, a consistent funky disco backbeat, chanting, freaky background vocals...³

creases. His sessions were held at Gooseberry Studios² where he added extra vocals, keyboards and percussion. His use of British female vocalists is a spectacular success. This was a tried and tested way to get an African record to sound “foreign” in the hope that the record would cross-over into the Western music market.

But Cosmic Sounds is only accidentally a disco boogie album. It is primarily an attempt by an artist to address global and African societal issues. The politico-intellectual, post-colonial discourse that pervades the music is still relevant today because a lot of the problems represented on the album are still here, stubborn plagues resisting the upward, onward path of time.

For example, on “Self Destruction”, Blintch rails against the senselessness of war and an arms race pursued by a few nations to the detriment of all of us:

“Everyday they build a better plane
For war-(chorus)
Every year making strongest bomb
For war-(chorus)
Every day they build atomic destroyer
For war-(chorus)
Every where you frighten poor people...”
By war-(chorus)
Every where you planting violence seed
By war-(chorus)
Every where you carry your terror
By war- (chorus)

Africa in the late Seventies/early 80s had become a house of hunger, characterized by prolonged independence struggles (Zimbabwe, Angola, South Africa), street protests, student activism, authoritarian leaders, failed democracies, deferred dreams, paranoid state security apparatus, coup d'états sponsored by imperial nation states.

These events created a sense of the politically disenfranchised African with little or no influence on his affairs and even less on global geo-politics. Nigeria’s head of state, Gen. Murtala Muhammed read his landmark speech at the OAU summit in Addis Abeba in 1976 and died 34 days after in a failed coup d'état:

“Africa has come of age. It’s no longer under the orbit of any extra continental power.”



THE BAND HANGING OUT WITH SOME FRIENDS IN THE FLAT WHERE THEY STAYED DURING THE RECORDING OF COSMIC SOUNDS, LOCATED IN BARIGA, A SUBURB IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ALPHONSO (GUITAR), UNKNOWN, UNKNOWN, DELEGE (KEYBOARD, UNCREDITED). PHOTO BY JUSTIN TCHATCHOUA (BASS)



JUSTIN TCHATCHOUA (BASS) WITH HIS FRIEND JULES ELONG (CAMEROONIAN KEYBOARDIST AND SESSION MUSICIAN), ENUGU, 1981.



PAUL SOKENG (DRUMS, RIGHT) WITH HIS FRIEND EUGENE NDEMA (NIGERIAN GUITAR PLAYER)

“It should no longer take orders from any country, however powerful. The fortunes of Africa are in our hands to make or to mar. For too long have we been kicked around; for too long have we been treated like adolescents who cannot discern their interests and act accordingly!”⁴

4 — Gen. Murtala Muhammed, OAU summit in Addis Abeba in 1976

It was in this political context, that Cosmic Sounds was written by N'draman Blintch, a Liberian student activist, with Cameroonian session players, Peter (Cross) Yeboah (Keyboards), Justin Tchatchoua (Bass), and Paul Sokeng (Drums), the album was titled Cosmic Sounds after the label founded by Patrick Onwuegbuzia in Lagos Nigeria. The sessions took place at the Phonogram Studios in Oregun, Ikeja, Lagos in 1980.

When one looks at the lyrics, one observes that although he hailed from Liberia, N'draman Blintch was very French. This is easily explained by the fact that he had lived and studied in Ivory Coast (a West African Francophone country. His politics also show that he was a student of Negritude, the literary and ideological movement of French-speaking black intellectuals, which took form as a distinctive and significant aspect of the comprehensive reaction of the black man to the colonial situation. The movement was started and developed by Aimé Césaire, and Leopold Sedar Senghor in the 30s/40s.

She Africa (ton tour viendra) the second song on Side B positions the black continent as a woman/mother, battered by history but who will come into its own someday. This is common motif in poems by Léon-Gontran Damas and Léopold Senghor.

Je chanterai tes louanges ma vie entire
(I will praise you all my life)
Je chanterai tes peines et tes souffrances
(I will sing of your pain and suffering)
A travers les balles comme derrière les barreaux
(In the midst of bullets and behind prison bars)
Je te chanterai...
(I will sing of you)

Frère et sœur noir
(Black brother and sister)
Frère tu n'es pas le dernier des hommes, bien au contraire
(Brother you are not the last of men, on the contrary)
Ceux qui nient tes valeurs aujourd'hui les prôneront demain
(Those who deny your worth will embrace it tomorrow)
La lutte est âpre mais nous vaincrons
(The battle is raging but we will be victorious)
Toute existence s'inscrit dans le cadre du changement
(To exist is to accept change as a constant)
Hier c'était l'Égypte
(Yesterday it was Egypt)
Au jourd'hui les USA, l'U.R.S.S.
(Today it's the USA, USSR)

Originally released in 1980 on Cosmic Sounds
Audio restauration: Frédéric D'Oriat Nicolas
Audio mastering: Nicolas Thelliez
Artwork restauration: Anais Barelli
Additional design : Côme de Bouchony
Liner notes: Temitope Kogbe
Project management: Louis Hautemule & Etienne Tron

Demain peut-etre l'Asie
(Tomorrow perhaps Asia)
Après-demain L'AFRIQUE
(In the near future, AFRICA)
Africa endure avec stoïcisme
(Africa, endure your travails without flinching)
Ton tour viendra
(your turn will come)

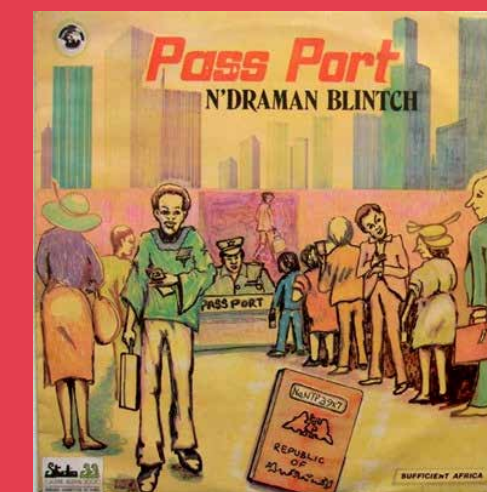
In the seventies, African leaders (in Pan-African conferences) projected that by year 2000, Africa will have matured to stand as a global power, free from the grasp of imperialism, free from murderous politics and corruption. Free to determine the fate of the future of the world, this is yet to be realised. However, close to half of Africa's population is under 25. This gives hope that the youth with access to new technology and information will find a way to give life to Blintch's prophesy of hope. •

Temitope Kogbe

“OTHER ALBUMS” ??



KIMAMELE, 19XX



PASS PORT, 19XX

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