

14 June 1977

Report on Festac for Nigerian Music Review by Randy Weston

© 1977 by Randy Weston

My only complaint about the music presented at Festac is that I couldn't split myself into four or five different people so that I could attend many more of the festival's offerings, because there was a tremendous wealth of musical expression presented there. But I do have some thoughts about some of the music and musicians who were not presented there that might be of interest.

I cannot speak for other countries, of course, but black American music of all kinds was seriously underrepresented at Festac. It seems to me that there was apparently no comprehensive, knowledgeable effort on the part of the U.S. Zone committee to see that there was a representative cross section of black American music at Festac. This is not to say that other art forms in which black Americans are active--dance, drama, films, painting and sculpture, fashion design, etc.--are not important, but none of these art forms originated with the American blacks. Gospel music, the blues, and especially the highly diversified music known as jazz* are a

* The term "jazz" is not acceptable to many black musicians, but it is so widely used that it is hard to avoid it; perhaps "American black music" is preferable. (I myself call my music "African rhythms" in an effort to convey to all who hear me or read about me that however they may label my music, and whatever my nationality, they must understand that my music is solidly rooted in the music of Africa.) I have tried to confine my use of "jazz" to those sections where I discuss the entertainment establishment's control of black music in America. What I am referring to in this report is black gospel music and spirituals, the blues, calypso and other African-based Latin and South American music, and the music that has come to be known as jazz. I am not referring to the music of performers working primarily in a more commercial and derivative vein, such as "jazz rock," discothèque music, or Las Vegas-style nightclub acts.