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Groove Theory: Fela Kuti, James Brown, and the Invention of Afrobeat

Who put the “beat” in afrobeat? An important shift occurred in West African popular music in the late 1960s as many musicians looked less to Europe and its former colonies in the Caribbean, and began to draw inspiration directly from African-American cultures in the US. This talk explores Fela Anikulapo Kuti’s seemingly paradoxical adoption of American funk grooves in his quest to further “Africanize” his music.

Video (MP4) Large File
Audio (MP3)

Professor Stewart has published articles on jazz, popular music, and music of Latin America. His book, Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz, was published in 2007 by the University of California Press. During 2006-07 he was a Fulbright Scholar, researching Afro-Mexican music and culture in Oaxaca and Guerrero, Mexico. A saxophonist, he has played, recorded, and toured with many leading figures in jazz and popular music. He currently performs with the Latin Jazz group Salsa Norteña.

The College of Arts and Sciences Full Professor Lecture Series was designed to give newly promoted faculty an opportunity to share with the university community a single piece of research or overview of research trajectory meant to capture the spark of intellectual excitement that has resulted in their achieving full professor rank.

This entry was posted on Monday, November 4th, 2013 at 4:36 pm and is filed under Full Professor Lecture Series. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

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