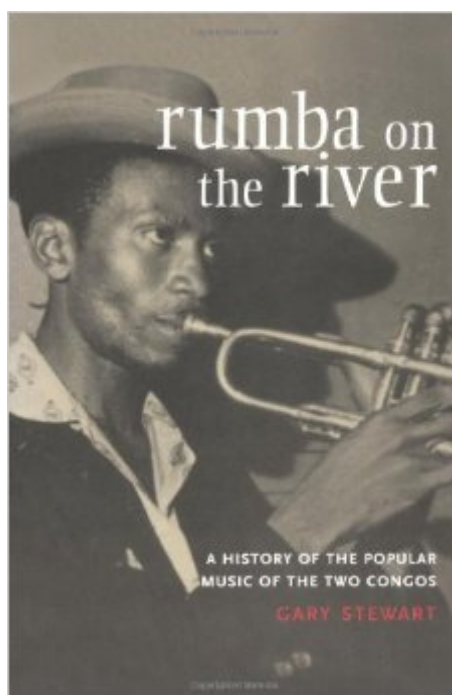


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# Rumba On The River: A History Of The Popular Music Of The Two Congos



## Synopsis

There had always been music along the banks of the Congo River—lutes and drums, the myriad instruments handed down from ancestors. But when Joseph Kabasele and his African Jazz went chop for chop with O.K. Jazz and Bantous de la Capitale, music in Africa would never be the same. A sultry rumba washed in relentless waves across new nations springing up below the Sahara. The Western press would dub the sound soukous or rumba rock; most of Africa called it Congo music. Born in Kinshasa and Brazzaville at the end of World War II, Congolese music matured as Africans fought to consolidate their hard-won independence. In addition to great musicians—Franco, Essous, Abeti, Tabu Ley, and youth bands like Zaïko Langa Langa—the cast of characters includes the conniving King Leopold II, the martyred Patrice Lumumba, corrupt dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, military strongman Denis Sassou Nguesso, heavyweight boxing champs George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, along with a Belgian baron and a clutch of enterprising Greek expatriates who pioneered the Congolese recording industry. Rumba on the River presents a snapshot of an era when the currents of tradition and modernization collided along the banks of the Congo. It is the story of twin capitals engulfed in political struggle and the vibrant new music that flowered amidst the ferment. For more information on the book, visit its other online home at [rumbaontheriver.com](http://rumbaontheriver.com)—an impressive resource.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gary Stewart's book is so very well researched. If you are not familiar with the Congolese Rumba,

the material will not really interest you and be difficult if not impossible to read. If you are familiar with this remarkable music in any way, you will end up seeking out and acquiring as much of this music and record titles as you can afford. I must have bought about 150 CD titles of the artists mentioned in the book. Stewart's book puts these artists and their music in the context of a history previously unwritten about in the English language. The only other book that comes to mind is Graeme Ewens' "Congo Colossus", but that title is more confined to the history of Franco (Francois Luambo Makiadi) and Le T.P. OK Jazz. If there is a criticism, it is a small one. He leaves out Orchestra Super Mazemba and Samba Mapangala. Although those artists made their mark in Kenya, they were in fact major Rumba artists from the Congo. However, Mr. Stewart performed remarkable research not to mention a history book that moves like an impossible to put down novel.

Chapters explore music, dance, and evolving trends in Congolese rumba tradition and provide so much accompanying explanatory history that even ethnomusicologists and college-level students of African culture and tradition will find it fascinating. Very highly recommended.

This book covers a lot of information, and does a surprisingly decent job at it. The author makes little attempt to be judgemental or pretentious. He just tries to present the complex history of modern Congolese music (the most dynamic and popular music from Africa) as best as he could source it, AND OBVIOUSLY BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE COULD HAVE DONE IT. A neat reference book for anyone interested in music from the Congos.

Able written by a published author of articles on African and Caribbean music whose work has appeared in "The Beat", "Option", "West Africa" and more, *Rumba On The River: A History Of The Popular Music Of The Two Congos* is an enthralling dissemination of how changing times and ancient traditions blended to create a distinctive type of music along the Congo River. From the currents of political struggle to the tides of self-expression, the history, vibrancy, and popularity of this music flowed, and its indelible impressions upon the human psyche are succinctly framed in an unforgettable prose.

Very detailed and informative account of the riots, birth and growth of Congo music. Stewart is passionately in love with this music and it comes through each page. Full marks for comprehensive approach and taking us through the entire wild ride of Congo/Zaire/DRC? If you have any interest in this music buy this book,

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