



Presents

FINDING FELA



A Film by Alex Gibney
1119' | USA | 2014 | HD



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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Alex Gibney examines the life, music, and cultural and political relevance of the Afrobeat genius, the Nigerian Fela Kuti, whose continued political persecution, unorthodox lifestyle, and, eventually, AIDS, made him one of the most controversial musicians ever, and now the subject of the massively successful Broadway show.

LONG SYNOPSIS

"Finding Fela" tells the story of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's life, his music, his social and political importance. He created a new musical movement, Afrobeat, using that forum to express his revolutionary political opinions against the dictatorial Nigerian government of the 1970s and 1980s. His influence helped bring a change towards democracy in Nigeria and promoted Pan Africanist politics to the world. The power and potency of Fela's message is completely current today and is expressed in the political movements of oppressed people, embracing Fela's music and message in their struggle for freedom.

Director's Statement – Alex Gibney

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

Alex Gibney

Director / Producer

Academy Award winner Alex Gibney, known for his gripping, deeply insightful documentaries, is one of the most accomplished non-fiction filmmakers working today. His 2008 film, TAXI TO THE DARK SIDE, received an Oscar for Best Feature-Length Documentary. Alex received another Academy Award nomination in 2006 for ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM.

Jack Gulick

Producer

Jack Gulick produced the documentaries “Blood Brothers” with Bruce Springsteen, “If All Goes Wrong” with The Smashing Pumpkins, “Bastards of the Party” the History of the LA street gangs for HBO, “Basic Black - The Lewis Black Story”, “Hit the Lights” with Metallica, and “Dancemaker” with Choreographer Paul Taylor also the Filmed Concert Productions “Lighting in a Bottle” for Alex Gibney, “ALL ACCESS” for IMAX, Dave Matthews Band for AOL, Andraé Crouch for PBS, Steve Miller Band for PBS, Boz Scaggs for PBS, Smashing Pumpkins, Audioslave, Matchbox Twenty, Lewis Black among others. Grammy Award Winner.

RUTH and STEPHEN HENDEL

Executive Producers

RUTH (Executive Producer) and STEPHEN HENDEL (Executive Producer). Ruth’s Broadway credits include: Death of Salesman (Tony®), Clybourne Park (Tony®), FELA! (with Stephen), American Idiot (with Stephen), Driving Miss Daisy, In The Heights (Associate), Red (Tony®), A View from the Bridge, Hamlet, Mary Stuart, All My Sons, 33 Variations, Passing Strange, Legally Blonde, Kiki and Herb Alive on Broadway, High Fidelity, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Caroline, Or Change, A Raisin in the Sun, Goldas Balcony, Frozen, Night Mother, Steel Magnolias, Barefoot in the Park and Metamorphoses. Off-Broadway credits include: Altar Boyz, Red Light Winter, Our Lady of 121st Street, The Exonerated and tick tick...BOOM!. Regional: As Much As You Can (Los Angeles) and currently Immediate Family (Chicago). Ruth Hendel is on the boards of the LAByrinth Theater, The Play Company and the Yale School of Drama Advisory. She is vice-chair and Stephen Hendel is treasurer of the Eugene

O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT. Stephen also serves on the boards of The New Group, The Culture Project, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, Afropop.org, Museum for African Art and on the Board of Visitors of the Yale School of Music.

FELA ANIKULAPO-KUTI BIO:

Fela Ransome Kuti was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, north of Lagos in 1938. His father was a Christian schoolmaster, minister and master pianist and his mother was a world-recognized feminist leader, who was very active in the anti-colonial Nigerian women's movement during the struggle for independence.

Fela was educated in Nigeria amongst the indigenous elite. Ironically, many of his classmates in his Nigerian school would become the very military leaders he so vociferously opposed.

With medical aspirations for their offspring (Fela's older brother, Koye, was to become a Deputy Director of the World Health Organization and his younger brother, Beko, President of the Nigerian Medical Association) in 1958 Fela's parents sent him to London for a medical education. Instead, he registered at Trinity College's school of music where he studied composition and chose the trumpet as his instrument. Quickly tiring of European composers, Fela, struck by Miles Davis and Frank Sinatra, formed the Koola Lobitos in 1961, and his band became a fixture in London's club scene. Two years later, Fela returned to Nigeria, restarted the Koola Lobitos, and became influenced by James Brown. Trying to find an authentic musical voice, he added elements of traditional Yoruba, high life and jazz, and "Afrobeat" was born. In 1969, Fela's Koola Lobitos traveled to Los Angeles to tour and record. During his eight months in the US, with LA as a home base, Fela befriended Sandra Isidore, who introduced him to the writings and politics of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver and other proponents of Black nationalism and Afrocentrism.

With this new politically explicit and critical worldview, Fela reformed the Koola Lobitos as Nigeria 70 and returned to Lagos. He founded a commune/recording studio called the Kalakuta Republic, complete with his own private nightclub, The Shrine, and Fela dropped his given middle name "Ransome," and replaced it with a Yoruba name "Anikulapo" (meaning "he who carries death in his pouch"). Playing constantly and recording at a ferocious pace, Fela and band (who were now called Africa 70) became huge stars in West Africa and beyond. His music served as a rallying cry for the disenfranchised, critiquing the military government, and made Fela not only a pop star but thrust him into political life. People took to the streets singing his songs and the military responded by viciously harassing Fela, jailing him and nearly killing him on several occasions.

In 1977, during a government-sanctioned attack on his Kalakuta Republic commune, Fela and other members of his commune were arrested; Fela himself suffered a fractured skull as well as other broken bones; a number of women living at Kalakuta were beaten and raped; and his 82-year old mother was thrown from an upstairs window, inflicting injuries that would later prove fatal. The soldiers set fire to the compound and prevented fire fighters from reaching the area. Fela's recording studio, all his master tapes and musical instruments and the only known copy

of his self-financed film Black President were destroyed.

After the Kalakuta tragedy, Fela briefly lived in exile in Ghana, returning to Nigeria in 1978. A year later, he formed his own political party, MOP (Movement of the People) and ran for president in two elections, although his campaigning was consistently blocked by the military. As the '80s ended, Fela recorded blistering attacks against Nigeria's corrupt military government.

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was arrested more than two hundred times in his life, and charged with almost every conceivable crime, although only serving one eighteen month sentence in jail for a currency violation. Despite this constant harassment he continued to live in Nigeria even though, as an icon in the international world of rock and roll, soul, jazz and hip-hop, he could have at any point abandoned Nigeria and led the life of an international music superstar. His death on August 3, 1997 of complications from AIDS deeply affected musicians and fans internationally, as a unique and ineffable musical and sociopolitical voice was lost. In Nigeria one million people attended his funeral. His incredible body of work, almost 70 albums, is now available, through public demand, all over the world.

CREDITS

Director	Alex Gibney
Producer	Jack Gulick
Producer	Alex Gibney
Executive Producer	Ruth Hendel
Executive Producer	Stephen Hendel
Co-Producer	Alison Ellwood
DOP	Maryse Alberti
Editor	Lindy Jankura
Composer	Fela Anikulapo-Kuti
Mixer	Tony Volante
Post Supervision	James Salkind
Researcher	Shari Chetok
Production Company	Jigsaw Productions, in association with Knitting Factory Entertainment, okayplayer, okyafrica

FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH:

Femi Kuti
Yeni Kuti
Seun Kuti
Bill T. Jones
Jim Lewis
Rikki Stein
Lemi Ghariokwu
Queen Kewe Anikulapo-Kuti
Michael Veal
Sandra Izsadore
John Darnton
Dele Sosimi
J.K. Braimah
Francis Kertekian
Tony Allen
Carlos Moore
Okwechime Abdul
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