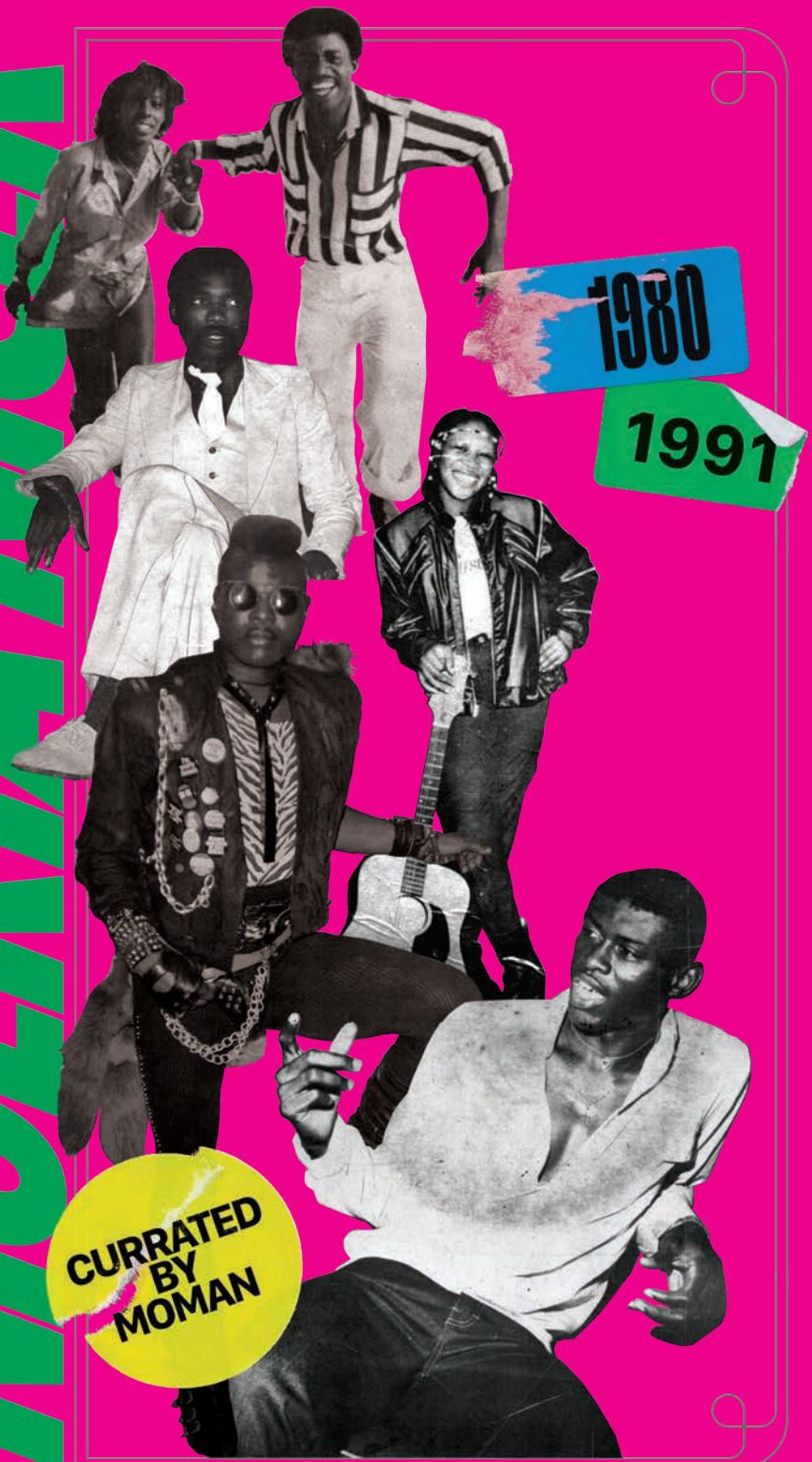
NIGERIA NIGER



1980

1991

CURRATED BY MOMAN

The enthusiastic response to the first installment of Nigeria Nicer (Nigeria Nice, 2019) exceeded all expectations!
I have homies who only mess with 60's soul, heads who would never listen to US boogie, bugging out to some disco music from Lagos.
I spent an evening in Kyoto jamming with a bunch of Japanese punk heads to Jake Sollo produced LPs. This mix finds me venturing further than I had expected into popular Nigerian music.
The deeper I dig into Nigerian music, the more I feel their new jack swing and hip hop.
Nigerian music in the 1980s and 90s mirrored popular trends in the West but always kept rooted in African musical traditions, subtly in the details of a slick disco production or more obviously in Digi Highlife.
Just because it sounds like Janet Jackson, Boyz II Men, or New Edition doesn't mean it's not thoroughly African. Many were radio hits in Nigeria at the time - people were clearly feeling them.

The universe continues to profoundly show me that we never know what's next or where we will find inspiration, what we will like, or who we will like. Even more so in this extremely uncertain world, keeping a cool head and an open mind can take us a long way.

Catch you on the flip,
-Moman

Moman &

Little is known about Starr.
She first appeared as Angela Star on vinyl in 1975 on The Ikenga Super Stars of Africa's Odinani Sounds System LP.
Angela Starr, real name Angela Okalazimkpe, put out her first and only album in 1986, entitled Boogie Girl. "Disco Dancing" was comped by Soul Jazz and has gotten the most attention, but "I Just Wanna Get Down" is the floor-tested party bomb that hit me from the opening bars.
Given the amount of pedigree on this album, she was clearly believed to be a promising talent.
Dizzy K is on backing vocals, Willy Roy playspiano, and the prolific Tony Okoroji produced the album - an all-star lineup of Nigerian session players.

Track 01

Angela Starr
I Just Wanna Get Down

Track 02

Eric Kol

My Lady Is A Star

In this day and age, Eric Kol is most recognized for his 1980s disco/boogie albums, but he was a versatile singer who adapted to the musical trends of the times.
Kol got his start fronting the Immortals in the 1970s.
His first solo record in 1978 was rife with heavy soul and afrobeat undertones.
Working at EMI, he had full creative control. Kol himself said that his material was held back by the lack of an ace producer.
Enter Odion Iruoje who, in 1980, pushed the sonic limits and helped Kol to break out with this title cut, "My Lady Is A Star", recorded at Phonodisk Studio on a 24-track board.

The trio of Kingsley "Dallas" Anyanwu, Maurice "Jackie" Anyaorah, and Ndubuisi "Roy" Obika form the backbone of the short-lived Esbee Family, one of the top Nigerian disco groups of the 1980s. Carol Ingrams and Pamela Douglas joined the Esbee Family on this album, Chics and Chickens.

The title cut has weird lyrical moments, but the overall theme and the picture of the ladies eating chicken on the front cover is truly bizarre.

Still, with superstar producer Jake Sollo on the boards, you'll be dancing your brains out to one of the best Sollo bass lines of all time.

Track 03

Esbee Family

Chick And Chickens

Track 04

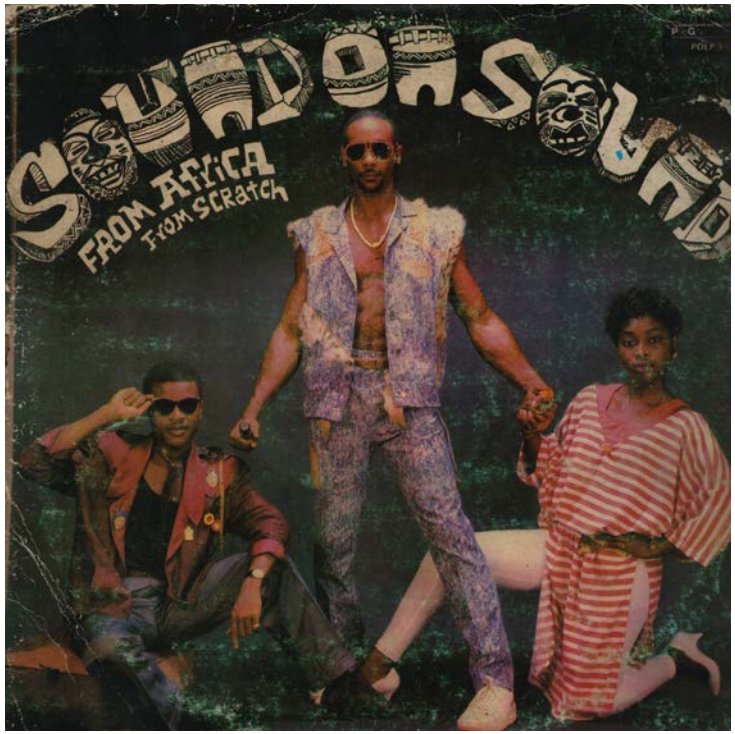
Jerry-Ella & The Sparklings

Am Ka Mo Ye

Finding information about the lesser-known Nigerian musicians of the 1980s and 90s can feel futile. Little has turned up about Jerry-Ella over the years.
This is his only LP, featuring the Sparklings, a mix of Nigerian and Cameroonian session players. Elimby "N" Oscar Hot-Cooler (quite a name) produced the tune and played many instruments from synth to guitar. "Am Ka Mo Ye" is the standout track and is incredibly catchy, a straight boogie banger.
Recorded at Recorddisc Studio in Lagos, where Fela's "Beasts Of No Nation" LP was also cut.

Easily one of the tightest, socially-conscious hip hop songs ever produced in Nigeria.
Sound on Sound's LP from 1988, African From Scratch, beyond being cleverly titled, was by many accounts the first rap album made in Nigeria.
"I'm African" was also released on a 12-inch with Ron "Scratch" McBean listed as the artist, not Sound on Sound.
McBean originally formed Sound on Sound in New Jersey, working with Sugarhill Records before moving the group to Nigeria.
I've spoken to many Nigerians who remember the group fondly.
Ron McBean, also known as "The Mad Master Mixer", was a pioneer of hip hop in the US as well.

Track 05



Sound On Sound
I'm African

Kingsley Bucknor

Someone Is Talkin' & Shoutin'

This song is an anomaly compared to Kingsley Bucknor's other tracks, which are more boogie-oriented.
He spent considerable time in London and overseas, so he knew how closely related boogie and hip hop were.
"Someone Is Talkin' & Shoutin'" was recorded in Britain on Bucknor's KAB label. Hoping for more international recognition, Polygram was brought in to help with marketing and distribution.
Domestically well-received at the time, the album went virtually unnoticed for decades until Left Ear Records (out of Australia) reissued the LP.

Jeffrey B. Onwe Nnamdi (aka Jeffrey Bon) is a name that isn't nearly as well known as the producer on this record the "Quincy Jones of Nigeria" Lemmy Jackson.
If Lemmy Jackson produced your record, people were going to notice it and check it hard. Jackson and the previously mentioned Jake Sollo were the two, top producers of the 1980s in Nigeria. Jeffrey Bon's only album, Related, was recorded and mixed at Afrodisia in Lagos. A tough pull on the original,"Better Take Your Time" is worth the search.
2011 saw a reissue by the long-standing Premier Music. Originally a label under the Phillips West umbrella, Premier music is still going strong decades later, reissuing lost gems and local hits.

Track 07

Jeffrey Bon
Better Take My Time

Track 08

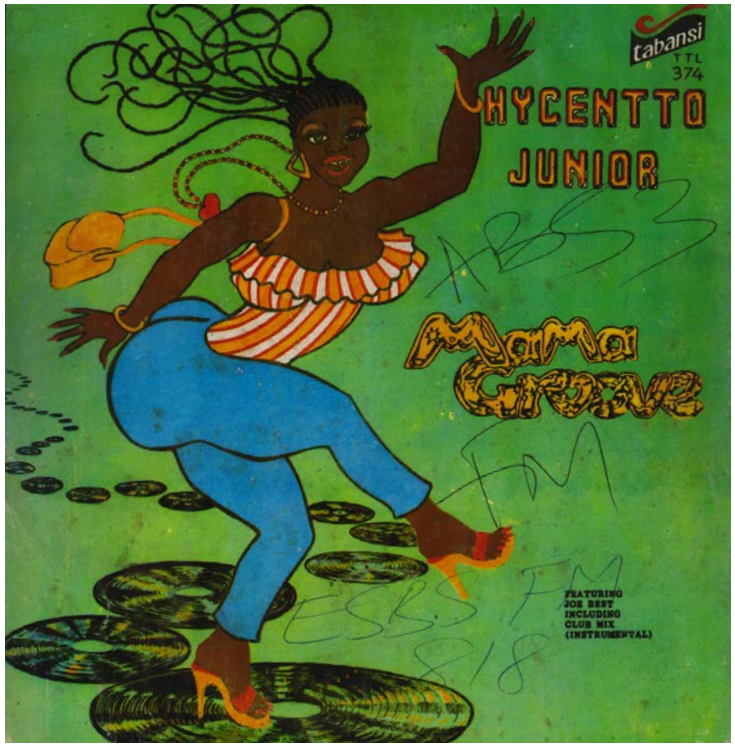
Ozo

Night Of The Black Mamba

Ozo's discography is confusing and takes time and thought to navigate.
Keni St. George reformed Ozo in 1980 and re-released new versions of their 1978 album tracks on Skylark Records, a label well known to collectors for coveted releases by Fela, Tee Mac, Beta Yama, and Roots Foundation. David Mancuso at the Loft in NYC and John Peel of BBC Radio One were the DJs who broke Ozo to their respective audiences, and the band saw some success in 1978 before breaking up.

These days it's easy to forget that hip hop, upon its inception in the 1980s, was dance music at its core.
Hyncetto Junior was known in Nigeria as a party-rocking rapper who got people up and going on the dancefloor.
Attracting the attention of one of the top producers of the day, Nkono Teles, Hycentto Junior released his sophomore album, Mama Groove. Poor distribution ultimately sank one of the most interesting albums of the early 90s to come from Nigeria, covering the gamut of popular musical styles of the time.
Mastered and mixed in Britain by Porky's (George Peckham), it was recorded at Tabansi's Studio.

Track 09



Hycentto Junior
Mama Groove

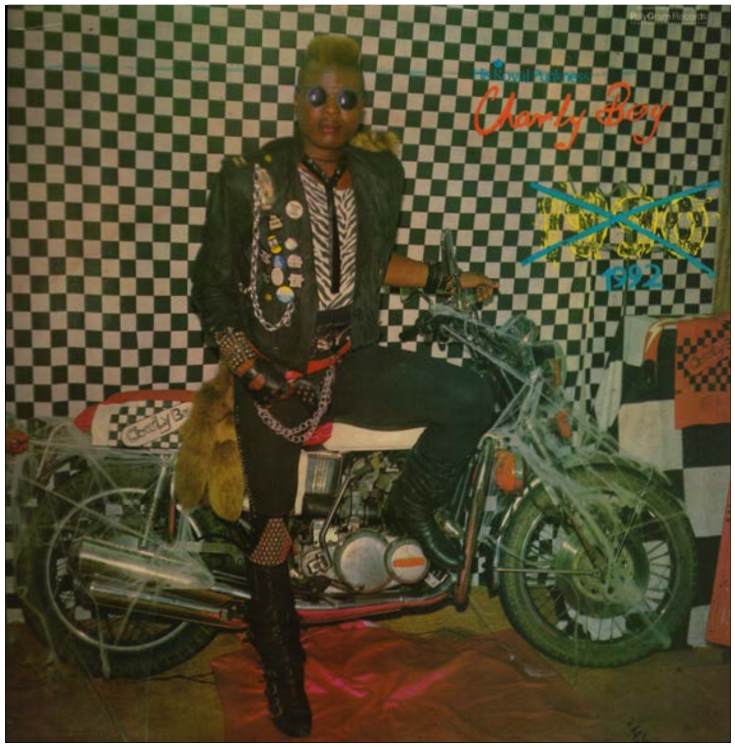
Track 10

Tony Igiettemo
Baby You Can Do It

EMI had one of the most technically advanced studios in Nigeria when this Tony Igiettemo LP,Hot Like Fire, was released in 1980. Tony isn't kidding; this album is seriously scorching! "Baby You Can Do It" was composed and arranged by Igiettemo and engineered by the prolific John Malife, who has his name on many classic Nigerian LPs of the time. It's hard to pick the biggest heat rock on this album, but "Baby You Can Do It" will absolutely incinerate a dancefloor.

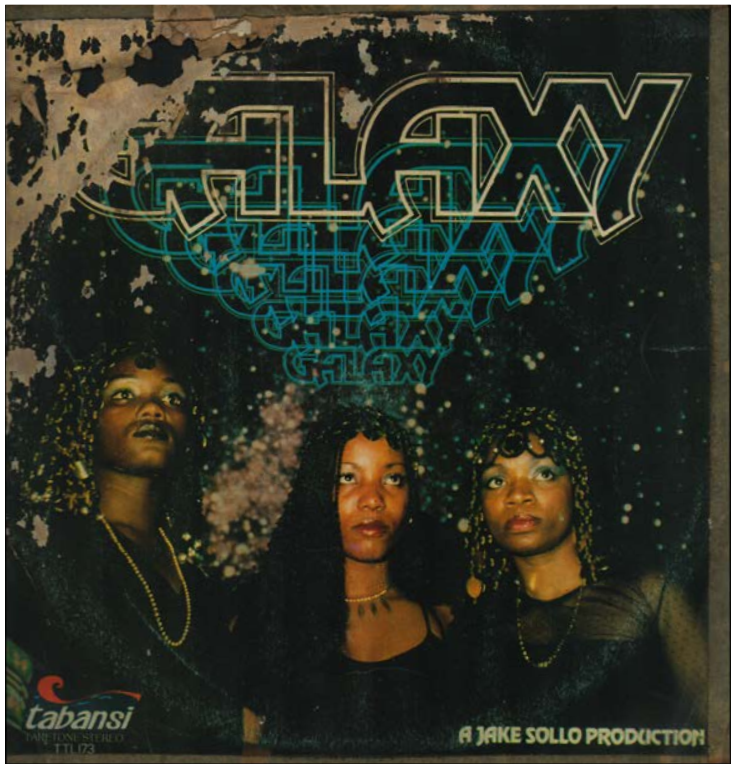
Not as overtly militant as Fela, Charly Boy could be equally as provocative, often singing about corruption in the Nigerian Government.
The title track, released in 1988, refers to the anticipated 1990 handover of power from the military to a civilian government. Charly Boy was a firebrand in so many ways, from his political standpoints to his fashion style, often referred to as "Nigeria's Boy George." The LP was popular, but, like Charly Boy himself, was controversial.
Recorded at Charly Boy's New Wave Studio, it was released on the major label, Polygram.

Track 11



Charly Boy
1990

Track 12



Galaxy

The Bed's Too Big Without You

Nigerian music in the 1980s heralded an undeniable connection to Britain - a common thread through many of the songs on this mix. Jake Sollo, (the top producer of Nigerian disco and boogie), often recorded and did production in London, using African and British musicians alike.

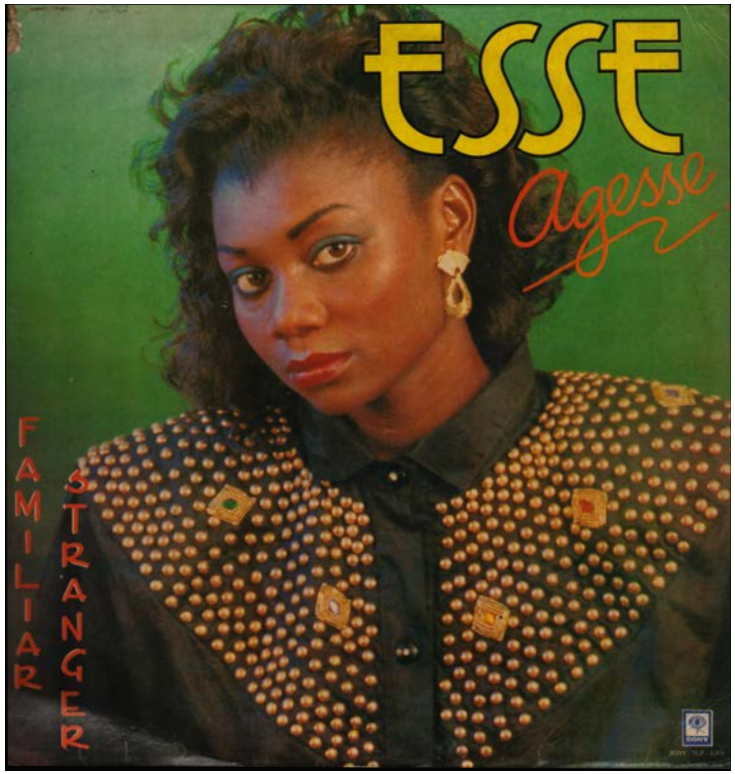
Galaxy was comprised of Pat Henry, Tracey King, and Wendy Harris, with some killer bass playing by Randy Taylor.

This LP was never released in England though, only in Nigeria. Coveted by many for the disco cuts, this Sting cover (yes, that Sting) is the one that I play out most.

It's a better version than the original, an ill mutant reggae-pop hybrid recorded in a farmhouse in Suffolk, England.

"Back To The Basics" is the mixtape closer - an obscure record in today's market, especially in America or Europe.
It was a smash hit in 1992, getting mad radio play all over Nigeria.
Esse Agesse was mostly recording jingles and backup work, on albums like Man Olivet's Guest House LP, in the years prior to this release.
She met well-known producer Kingsley Ogoro while working on Segun Arinze's Dreams album, eventually getting noticed by Sony Music, who released this album to much fanfare.
At a time in Nigeria when most releases were reggae-oriented, this was a straight pop tune.
Agesse eventually settled in Ireland, where she dedicated herself to empowering migrant women and children.

Track 13



Esse Agesse
Back To The Basics

Design by Jeremy Wirth