

Somi - The Lagos Music Salon (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01. First Kiss: Eko Oni Baje 02. Love Juju #1 03. Lady Revisited (feat. Angelique Kidjo) 04. Ankara Sundays 05. Ginger Me Slowly 06. When Rivers Cry (feat. Common) 07. Brown Round Things 08. The Story of Monkey 09. Akobi: First Born S(u)n 10. Two Dollar Day 11. Still Your Girl 12. Four.One.Nine 13. Love Nwantinti (feat. In His Image) 14. Four African Women 15. Hearts & Swag 16. Love Juju #2 17. Last Song 18. Shine Your Eye

“Some people see me as an African artist and not jazz, while others see me as a jazz artist influenced by Africa. But I’m not focused on genre. My intent is to be honest with the songs and where they take me.” – Somi

Singer Somi, born in Illinois as the daughter of immigrants from Uganda and Rwanda, releases her album debut on O’Keh titled *The Lagos Music Salon*, which tells a very moving background story. She decided to move to Lagos, Nigeria for one and a half years in 2009, which was also the year where she released her album *If the Rains Come First*, after the tragic death of her beloved father. At first, Somi struggled with her decision to move away from her New York home base: “Was I going to disappear? Would people forget about me? But after months of writing in my journal, I discovered a body of work was emerging”, says Somi.

Also, Lagos doesn’t have the cultural infrastructure of small clubs like New York, so Somi started to test her work on Nigerian audiences and produced salons at art galleries, which have an intimate character. Somi tells: “It grew into a series where I’d invite local artists to perform as well. That work greatly enriched my experience, challenged me to think more about African notions of cultural intimacy, and gave birth to *The Lagos Music Salon* concept.”

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Somi weaves through the collection of captivating songs with a socio/cultural poignancy. The most dynamic piece is the bass line-driven “Four African Women,” a sketch of four African women who each experienced a different hardship—genocide, skin bleaching, circumcision, prostitution. “Brown Round Things” tells the story of lamenting prostitutes Somi observed in Lagos, and features a moving, melancholic solo of Nigerian-American trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire. Also in the mix are field recording snippets, including a parabolic story of an over-skilled monkey. The album is topped off by carefully matched guest performances, such as Angelique Kidjo, who contributes to “Lady Revisited”, and Common, who performs in the rap-inflected cinematic reflection on Africa’s pollution “When Rivers Cry”. --- okeh-records.com

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