

## KUNSTENFESTIVALDESARTS 09

# Congo-punk is the future!

## Less bling bling, more boom boom

— Virginia Dupray, Studios Kabako

It's about to start! This is the one place where everything else can be forgotten. The night is still young, fortunately. Finally getting your breath back, after all the bustle, the coming and going, the interminable queues and the fights over a trifle or nothing at all... Hearing that your wages haven't arrived yet, thinking maybe it's better to look for a zong-zing, something out of the box of tricks, a little business to earn a crust. Gathering up all your courage for another few hours of waiting and another few hours of public transport – 'public' is the perfect word here, as in these overpacked buses you share not only your space but also your body, feet and sweat.

Anyway, forget it for a moment, relax a bit, a breath of fresh air, have a beer – Primus or Skol, depending who's performing tonight... we're almost off...

The stage is narrow, a wobbly thing, little more than nothing. And yet the whole group is standing there: about ten dancers, mostly women, as many singers, mostly men, one or two atalaku<sup>01</sup>, the musicians, drummer, bassist, guitarists, keyboards... And all those who want to be seen, who have paid to be there, who are 'tolerated' because... well in fact they are the only ones who know why... And Him, the One for whom everyone has come, he will arrive later. First get the audience warmed up a bit.

Yes, it's starting... we have been able to drink something – Primus or Skol – eaten a kebab or two (made with tailpieces; you would think the Congo was the biggest importer of turkey tailpieces, the breasts and the legs seem to end up somewhere else!), we have had time for a little seduction, to give our eyes a treat...

On that narrow stage, everyone makes space for themselves to do their thing: the dancers dance, dressed as princesses, devilishly young and sexy, bodies the only reason for their existence, their body is for sale, figuratively and later perhaps literally too... The audience knows their choreography back to front and imitate it in the nightclubs later on. They are seasoned with obligatory steps, the limping duck, the war victim, the ape... touching images of a wounded or crazed and frantic body...

more more  
more...  
future

The singers smooth the way, as a group or individually, for Him, the 'King', 'Papa', the 'Amighty President', the 'Emperor', that everyone is waiting for... Powerful yet feminine voices, sound imitations, whistling, screaming, the atalaku who alternately begs, commands and stirs up the audience and the singers. Not a one-off, clear-cut scream, but one prolonged cry that dies down then swells up again...

The musicians are right at the back, you can't see them but they play fantastically. That full sound, those succulent chords, who cares about noise levels and exploding neurons, that's what we've paid for, you can hear it from miles away, it overwhelms brilliant guitar chords... sound drowned by noise, noise interrupted by music...

And then, at last, there He is, God, the Pope, the King... in a shiny suit, a born star. He won't disappoint, however well or badly he performs. The main thing is that he is standing there, in all his glory, making dreams come true... the dreams of his audience... great and poor at the same time!

The stage is a small world in its own right, where everyone can don a robe of luxury, happiness and sensuality, at least for a few hours.

And then a thong pops up above a waistband, a shoulder strap breaks, the sweat moulds the synthetic shirts around the singers' bodies. Midnight is already long past, the bodies and the voices are tired, the dancer sits this one out, the princess is a little girl again, with a shoddy costume and running mascara, day breaks, the traffic starts up again in the sleeping Kinshasa.

### The spirit of punk

*More more more... future* brings these dreams to the stage, dreams that evaporate at the break of day, this comédie humaine Congo-style, the powerful energy that fills the void for a few hours, that of the treasury and that of everyday life, as well as the potholes in the road and the gaps in the memory, the empty stomachs and the bottomless pit of illusions. But this time, without the glamour, flashy cars and designer clothes, we return to the frenzy, the high spirits, the scream! The scream of the guitars, of the voices, of the bodies, the scream against all those absurd days that lurch between an endless series of 'nos' (no money, no water, no electricity, no transport...) and the list of horror stories that grows longer and longer.

It's the spirit of punk we can hear, the rebellion of the white working-class youth in the seventies and eighties, living in a society with no future.

In Congo, this future has already been nonexistent for so long, and that's exactly why we are demanding more and more and more...

More of a future for the young musicians in *more more more... future*: 'Storm' Patou and 'Concrete' Cédric, nicknames as an antidote to the vulnerability of lives and projects on this side of the globe.

More future for 'Le Coq chante'; 'The Cock that Crows!' – this is the name he put on his voting card. Although you can't plan anything in this country, you can at least choose your own name and date of birth... Patou, Le Coq, Cédric, Papy the elder (already 8 years at Studios Kabako!) and Dino, the little brother, Patient Kake Ya Moyi<sup>02</sup>, Flamme and Faustin will travel the world and return to Kinshasa or Kisan-gani, with a little more future in their pockets, with grand dreams and a plan to make them come true...

Yes! It's about to start, I'm telling you!

<sup>01</sup> Who keep things lively

<sup>02</sup> Swahili for lightning in the blazing sun