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Franco et L'OK Jazz
(Marceline)

Recorded around 1970 the original name came from the OK Bar (owned by Oscar Kashama). With the title of their first album, which became the band's slogan "*On entre Ok on sort KO*" (You enter Ok and leave KO'd [knocked out]) defining a music for the masses and their asses, this is an extraordinary cover. Never a military band, a closer look shows OK Jazz in the uniform of Mobutu's Mouvement Populaire de Révolution. This is scary stuff, Mobuto a violent dictator. So what do we make of this? And where is Franco? For it is his guitar, particularly on Mado, the second track on the first side that links Franco to jazz—as he

innovatively and improvisationally works over old traditions, refocuses trends and changes the way the music lives and breathes in strange new ways. Never just Mobutu's "Authenticité," the cover stands in stark contrast to what's inside.



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Mobio Angakou Ludovic
et Son Ensemble (Yapi Rene)
Yapi Jazz

Côte d'Ivoire. The 1960s. Abidjan is about to become a cultural beacon in West Africa as the energy of the postindependence cocoa economic miracle fuels a new urban music. The cover photograph holds this moment: the band's bus in an Abidjan street on the way to the Oasis du Desert bar to perform with Amedee Pierre. Singing in the languages of the street—in Bete or Dioula—echoing independence as they replaced Spanish and French as the language of music. And who is the driver? Mobio Angakou or Yapi Rene? Does it matter? The expression of non-

chalant freedom, named as the owner of Yapi Jazz heralds the arrival of this Ivorian "jazz" which reflects what Mamadou Doumbia famously sang in his first song in Dioula in 1963—"destiny is a slate you can write on and rub out"

The Black Elegance:
Escape from the '80s

Charles Tonderai Mudede

The Crepuscular '80s Dub

The 1980s were the end of a world. Its hours and days detailed the sunset of the twentieth century, which opened in 1917. The nineteenth century, which ran from 1789 (the French Revolution) and closed with the end of the First World War and the birth of the Soviet Union, was the platform from which the dreams (and consequent nightmares) of the twentieth century were launched. These dreams (and nightmares), rocketed by the militarized and mobilized super powers, each imagining itself to be "the legitimate heir"¹ of the nineteenth century, came to end in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall—an event that was accompanied by other great events of that astonishing year: after twenty-seven years of imprisonment, the releasing of Nelson Mandela; the first bursts of the Japanese bubble; the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan; the Tiananmen Square massacre; and the release of the swan song of the hypermasculine revolutionary black male, Public Enemy's "Fight the Power."

When people say that we entered the twenty-first century on September 11, they are gravely mistaken. Despite the scale of the destruction, 9/11 was mostly just that: massive destruction. It was the collapse of two massive buildings but not the collapse of the prevailing ideological edifice of our new times.² The buildings went down but the ruling ideology remained erect. It is no accident that the towers were annually spiritualized by nearly 100 search lights, the Tribute in Light. The thing of each tower is gone but not the more important thing-in-itself: the post-Bretton Woods economic order of floating currencies, shareholder maximization, financial deregulation, and the *satellization* of financial flows.³

9/11 was the deepening and intensification of what was already there, the twenty-first century, in all of its significant features, which Deleuze succinctly describes in his "brief and enigmatic essay, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control'"⁴.

Published at the dawn of the twenty-first century, 1990 (indeed, the first year after the very short twentieth century), "Postscript on the Societies of Control" outlines the primary shifts and new directions that were to shape what President George Bush Sr., famously called The New World Order: the "breakdown of all sites of confinement" that defined "disciplinary

1 In *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, Susan Buck-Morss writes: "The great cold war enemies, while having been truly dangerous to each other, appear as in fact close relatives. Their common descent from the French revolution (which Lenin constantly stressed, but with the understanding that since October 1917 only his own regime was the legitimate heir)."
2 In *Lenin and Philosophy*, Louis Althusser writes: "[Ideology according to Marx is] an Imaginary assemblage (bricolage), a true dream, empty and vain, constituted by 'the day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence."
3 Jean Baudrillard called this stage of capitalism *Transeconomics*: "Our only reality is an unchecked orbital whirl of capital..."
4 From Michael Hardt's essay "The Withering of Civil Society," which is published in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings In Politics, Philosophy, and Culture*.

society" (prisons, schools, barracks, and so on); the diminishing role of the nation state in controlling the desires of capital (the Japanese management guru, Kenichi Ohmae championed this as "The Borderless World" in his bestseller *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*, which was also published in 1990); the merging of Third and First worlds within the same geographic space (characterized by the growing similarities between cities like Los Angeles and Mexico City or, more physically, San Diego and Tijuana—as noted in Mike Davis' 2000 *Magical Urbanism*—and also, more globally, described as uneven development in David Harvey's 2006 *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*); the end of distinct economic right and left positions in politics.

In the way that Hiroshima accelerated the twentieth century, 9/11 accelerated the twenty-first century. The parts that were gathering to give the era its final shape and meaning were rushed closer to their defining center when the second hijacked jet plane hit its tower. This is why the term "new war" so easily replaced the term "new economy"—they were, as Hal Foster says in another context, "expressions of a particular period": meaning, concepts conditioned and fashioned by the same historical moment or materials. We must turn to the 80s to see the end. Objects in the 90s are exposed to the strange light of dawn; objects in the 80s are rounded and caught in the diminishing light of dusk.

Dub: The Final Events

Chic releases "Good Times"; Margaret Thatcher takes power in the U.K.; the Soviets invade Afghanistan; the Space Shuttle program is launched; the Three-Mile Island meltdown occurs; Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's exile ends and the Iran hostage crisis is born; Skylab, America's first space station, launched in 1973, reenters the Earth's atmosphere, showering fiery fragments over Australia; The failure of Operation Eagle Claw brings an end to President Carter's reelection hopes; former Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan is elected the 40th President of the U.S.; the Volker shock kills high inflation and initiates the management of interest rates as the sole economic policy for the U.S.; the nuclear reactor core of Cosmos 1402 returns to the earth, leaving a radioactive trail through the atmosphere; Argentina and Britain declare war over the Falkland Islands; a Soviet jet shoots down Korean Air Flight 007; Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis begin working with SOS Band; Chernenko dies and is replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev; U.K. miners strike; China initiates the second phase of an economic program launched by Deng Xiaoping a month before the first year of the last decade of the twentieth century; the crack epidemic hits every American city with a large black population; one of the reactors at Chernobyl explodes and releases into the atmosphere thirty to forty times the radioactivity of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Public Enemy drops "Don't Believe the Hype"; the Challenger Space Shuttle explodes in the sky; the core of what was to become Mir Space Station is launched; the Iran-Contra hearings start; Cosmonauts Vladimir Titov and Musa Manarov spend 366 days in Mir setting a record for the longest time any earth-born creature has spent in space; the Pan-Am Lockerbie crash occurs; SOS Band completes its last hit with Jimmy Jam

and Terry Lewis, "Borrowed Love"; Cuba withdraws from Angola; a fatwah is issued on the author of *Satanic Verses*; Ayatollah Khomeini dies; the Berlin Wall falls; the Strategic Defense Initiative program is aborted; Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan and the Taliban take power; Public Enemy opens "Fight the Power" with the words: Nineteen Eighty Nine.

"The Clock Keeps Turning—A Remix"

In 1979, Chic's "Good Times" opens with this line: Happy days are here again. The "happy days" the singers have in mind are located in a time before the processes of de-industrialization began sucking the economic life out of urban cores, transforming, in city after city, black neighborhoods into the "hoods" that Mel Melle described in hip-hop's first major social statement: "The Message" (1981). Like the TV show, *Happy Days*, *Good Times* is nostalgic. What it longs for is what the Chicago school of sociologists in the 1930s and '40s called "the black metropolis," which, though considerably poorer than white neighborhoods, still had recognizable leaders, a class pyramid (from the many indigent to a relatively stable working class to the very few affluent), homeowners, and storeowners. This was the time of "the jitterbug," a time when "boys could be boys" and "girls could be girls." In the black metropolis, a father brings home the bacon and a mother cooks it. This world of factory work was in fast decline by 1974 (the year of the first showing of *Good Times*, a sitcom set in a Chicago housing project), and all but gone by 1979 (the year of the last showing of *Good Times*).

Inspired by Roxy Music, Chic introduces black elegance, the fashion of escapism. Black elegance is the hot air that lifts the balloon of black pop over the economic devastation of the final Reagan years. By the time hip hop begins its descent from space (or electro funk) to the streets (in 1981), R&B has long departed from Motown for the sky—and it stays up there until Mary J. Blige collaborates with rap to negotiate a return to the "hood," which by the mid-1990s is on the verge of being wiped out by a Clinton-era wave of redevelopment capital. This wipeout is the subject of August Wilson's last play, *Radio Golf*.

A Mix of Time and Chic

With black elegance, two streams become one during the '80s. The source of the first stream was Chic, and the source of the second stream was Time. From Time we get Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. From Jam and Lewis we get the SOS Band. The SOS Band draws its cosmopolitan look from Chic and its post-disco sound from Time, whose lead singer is Morris Day, Prince's arch-rival in *Purple Rain*.⁵

5 Though connected with Time, and coming from the same city, Minneapolis, Prince has never been part of the black elegance movement, which on principle never blurs the line between male and female roles. The women in black elegance aspire to be ladies, and the men aspire to be gentlemen. The sex codes are stable. Prince, as Steven Shaviro has pointed out in *Doom Patrol*, is not stable; he is not altogether black or altogether white, nor altogether a woman or altogether a man. Prince is mixed and androgynous, and his look and music constantly disturb clear codes, clear roles, clear borders. "If I Was Your Girlfriend" is a prime example of how well he blurs the border between the sexes.

The Floating World of Black Elegance

In 1983, the SOS Band releases the album *Rise*, which is produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis (former members of Time) and contains the hit single "Tell Me If You Still Care." The video for that single captures the essence of black elegance, a mode and mood inaugurated by Chic's "Good Times." In the video, immaculately dressed members of the SOS Band fly through the clouds in a dream of a blimp. Far down below are the too painful postindustrial, post-white-flight, post-Watts, post-Treaty of Detroit, post-New-York-Drop-Dead, post-black-metropolis realities/blues of the hoods ("Temporary lay-offs," "Easy Credit rip-offs"); up in the blimp are the transitory pleasures of sex, pop music, and designer clothes. It is this disco-funk escapism that modern hip hop (1987 to 1992) rebels against. Often, this rebellion is hypermasculine, as it attempts to resuscitate the black power movement which, in pop music, collapsed under the contradictions of Bob Marley's internationalism. Public Enemy leads the reconstruction effort with new sampling technologies. The crew, which enters the mainstream in 1988, borrows heavily from the sermonic tradition, the industrial-era images of black male militancy, and focuses on urban economic development. In an effort to keep things real, hip hop, in general, replaces the business suits, fedoras, and champagne of black elegance with tracksuits, sneakers, and 40 ouncers. The black elegance dream blimp crashes in 1992 when Mary J. Blige makes a truce with the street. (Note: black elegance must not be confused with the Clinton-era cult of bling-bling.)

The Economics of Black Elegance

In 1986 Gwen Guthrie releases the economic doctrine of black elegance: "Ain't Nothin' Goin' On But The Rent." To stay high in the air, to stay way above the neoliberal demolition of social housing and New Deal guarantees, Guthrie abandons love as it has been known in the West since the twelfth century (also a massive period of social change); for her, love is "too mysterious" and what is clear, what is understandable, what everything in life boils down to is paying the rent. Because the government no longer provides a security net, and it's now all up to the individual to make or break; from here on out it's "no romance without finance," no sex without a wage. Nothing only produces nothing. You must have some money if you want to get some.

This is not a joke. This is a serious and blunt declaration. And in 1988, hip hop, with its growing obsession with being, staying, keeping it real, which usually takes the form of a street reality that produces what LA's NWA calls "street knowledge," confronts Guthrie's doctrine and the excesses of black elegance as a whole. The year NWA releases *Straight Outta Compton* (which means: "Straight Out of the Realities of a Postindustrial Black Neighborhood") Three Times Dope, a Philadelphia crew whose lead rapper, EST, has the dopest fade, declares in "Funky Dividends" that enough is enough. For the trio, the ultimate substance of a relationship should be once again love and not money. (Public Enemy is not at odds with this view. And to make their case, they, like Chic's "Good Times," turn to the happy days, the days of their moms and pops, the age of the "black metropolis"—Keynesian-era black neighborhoods that

were stabilized by a large working-class stratum.⁶ Back in those days it was about the heart, about the kind of love that made its first appearance in the West in the High Middle Ages; these days it's about staying paid. Indeed, maintaining one lover is so expensive that you can't afford to have two. "This is getting ridiculous!" yells Three Times Dope's beat-maker, Chuck Nice. "That's the third dress this week!"

The split between hip hop realism and R&Bs escapist elegance is finally resolved in 1995 when Mary J. Blige, who first brought R&B down to the street level in 1992, makes a commitment of ghetto love to hip hop's Method Man on "I'll Be There for You/You're All I Need to Get By"—a *hoodization* of a black-metropolis-era tune "You're All I Need to Get By." R&B and hip hop, which have been separated since "Good Times" (the tune that introduced black elegance and hip hop—"Rapper's Delight"—to the world) are reunited, in the video for "I'll Be There for You/You're All I Need to Get By," on the very same spot that the rapper Intelligent Hoodlum first "bust a nut," the project roof.

The Pain of Too Much Pleasure

With the SOS Band, the acronym stands for "Sounds Of Success," and not, as one might expect, considering the period of time that the Atlanta-based group experienced its peak, the early to mid '80s, "Save Our Souls." Despite the consolidation (Reaganomics) and globalization (Structural Adjustment Program) of neoliberal policies, the federal and banking disinvestment of the inner city, and the rise of a violent drug market (globalization ghetto style) organized around what Cornel West described as the quintessential postmodern drug, crack. SOS Band decides to abandon reality and spend some of the harshest years in post-slavery, black American history dreaming of fine clothes, champagne bubbles, and private clubs that float high above the city. Video after video ("Just The Way You Like It," "Tell Me If You Still Care"), we see ordinary, working-class people zapped out of reality and zapped into



Cover of the SOS Band, *On the Rise*, 1983. Cover illustration by Ezra Tucker. Reproduced by permission of Demon Music Group Ltd.

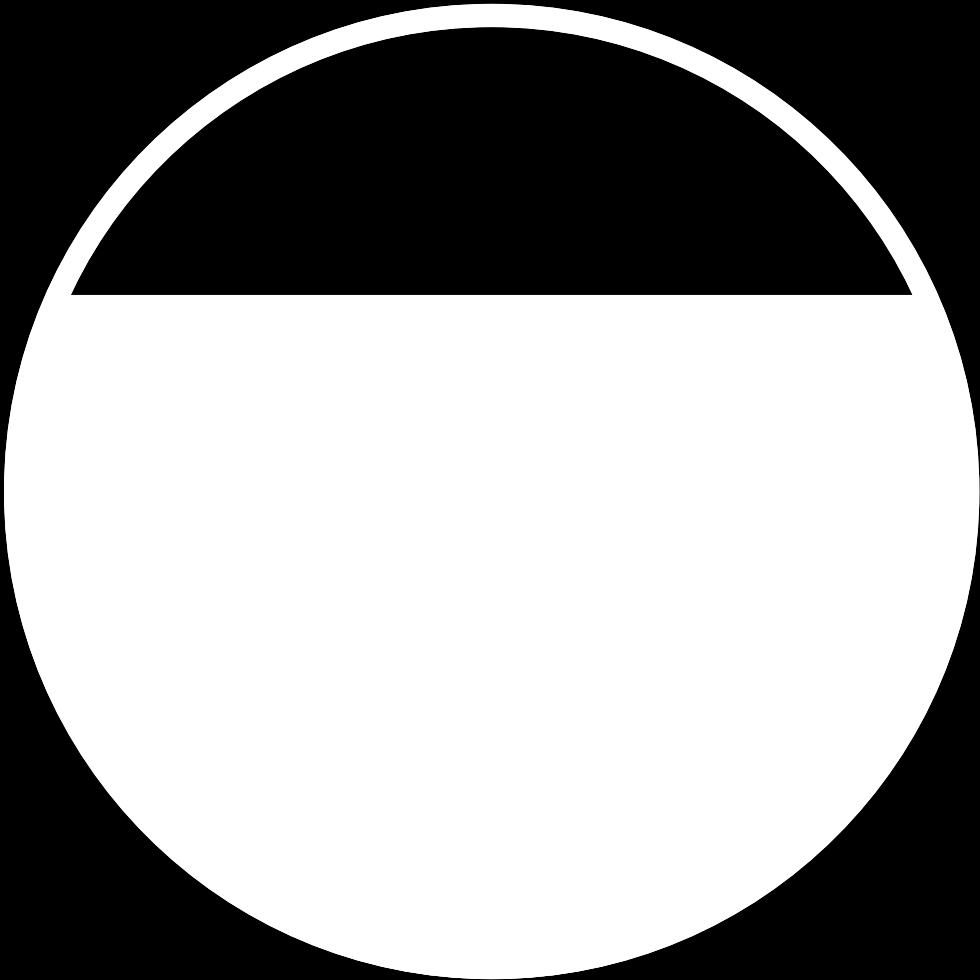
⁶ The sociologist Wilson Julius Williams explains in his seminal study *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* that in the industrial black metropolis of the '50s and '60s, 77 percent were employed, whereas in the postindustrial hood of the '80s, only 23 percent were employed.

fantasy clubs where the only kind of pain they might feel is “the pain of too much pleasure.”

In their most stylish and cinematic video, “Borrowed Love,” SOS Band is not in the sky or in a dream but dancing in the ruins: The hot sun appears to have just set, the cooling sky is pink and dark blue, in the distance is a black massif, and in the ruins of an apartment building is the band, dressed in garments that flow over swaying bodies. The men and women express no emotion; they have perfected the aristocratic art of class indifference.

The editing is as smooth as the movements of the dancers. The camera pans across, glides over, slides toward, pulls away from the ruins of a building that was destroyed not so much by time but by a wrecking ball. And we cannot disassociate this wrecking ball with the one that begins demolishing Robert Taylor Homes in 1998.⁷

Unlike Benjamin’s *Angel of History* (who “sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet...” and wants, “to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed”), in “Borrowed Love,” black elegance is so self-confident, so unfazed by what the British dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, with Thatcherism in mind, described as “destruction all around,” that it has the imagination (no, the audacity) to project itself into the twenty-first century and persist in the aftermath of the U.S.’s complete break with the social form of urban development. As Mary Davis sings about “the emptiness, the emptiness,” we realize that it’s not the fall of dusk, the mood and moment of the '80s, but the rise of dawn, the new millennium, that’s brightening the sky above the massif, the desert, the ruins of the hood.



7 From *The Wall Street Journal*, December 2000: “[F]or months [Ms. Hewitt, a 23-year-old Taylor Homes resident] has listened to a wrecking ball taking bites out of the building behind hers. Through her window, she can see moving trucks backing up to her building, which is known only by its address: 4444 South State. Her building is next, yet she hesitates to go.”