



Allen steps into limelight

THERE are few living musicians as influential on the world stage as drummer Tony Allen.

As a member of the band of the late legendary Nigerian musician Fela Kuti in the 60s and 70s, Allen was instrumental in creating the musical style of Afrobeat that has not only thrived in its own right, but influenced other styles of music including jazz, funk and rock.

James Brown, Paul McCartney, Bootsy Collins, Ginger Baker and Brian Eno are just some of a diverse group of musicians who have poured praise on Allen for his skill and influence.

Allen was recently invited by Britpop icon Damon Albarn to be the drummer in the supergroup The Good, the Bad and the Queen alongside Paul Simonon (The Clash) and Simon Tong (The Verve).

He has collaborated with musicians from all over the world in genres including funk, dub and electronica.

While Fela Kuti is often credited as the primary figure of Afrobeat, it was Allen's natural polyrhythmic drumming style that came to be the core element of the far-reaching hybrid genre.

Allen was the only musician in Kuti's band who wrote his own music, with Kuti writing the parts for the other musicians, before Allen left the band in 1978.

Could it have been the lack of recognition that prompted Allen strike out on his own?

Getting the answer from the man himself – speaking from his home in Paris – proved difficult.

Allen did say, however, that he didn't need to look around him for inspiration to create music because it came from within.

"A composer is a composer," he said "He doesn't need to be inspired by anything."

Allen said there was never any chance that he may have chosen a career other than music.



Tony Allen

"It's my life and I don't want to work," he said. "If I stopped making music, I wouldn't have a life."

■ Tony Allen will perform at Beck's Music Box on Thursday, March 5 as part of the Perth International Arts Festival.

Christian Wilkinson