JUJUS
ALCHEMY OF THE BLUES
POEMS BY
SARAH WEBSTER FABIO
READ BY
SARAH WEBSTER FABIO
WITH MUSICAL BACKGROUND
Musical compositions are all originals from the combined efforts of the following: Wayne Wallace, Ronald Fabio, and Cyril R. Fabio III.

Narration: Thomas Albert Fabio.

DESIGN: Joe Clark
CONVERSE DESIGN: Ronald Cline

© 1976 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.

Library of Congress Catalog No. 76-53088

WARNING: Unauthorized reproduction of this record is prohibited by law.
ALCHEMY
OF THE BLUES

INTRODUCTION

I feel that these represent the epitome of my experiment-
ing with the integration of music and poetry in a Black
idiom taken from the rich source of inspiration welling
from the Black experience here in America. With a house band
and a resident poet in the Fabio household during the incu-
bation period necessary in making things work as a whole
piece this was a good beginning. As you know we had a
film and sound expert, Cheryl Fabio, who added another
dimension by making a film of the process - "Rainbow
Black," I think she calls it. We also had a budding romance
between lead guitarist, Wayne Wallace and technical
assistant, Renee Fabio, and the offshoot of this "Don't
fight the feeling" venture is another member of the extended
family as Wayne Wallace is now my son-in-law and even
more importantly there is a baby, Tamara Wallace. Fred
Cohn, the engineer and co-producer for one of the albums,
spent time and energy on the group and wholly entered into
the spirit of the togetherness which pervaded the experi-
ence. And, last but not least, since your initial confidence
in our ability with the production of "Boss Soul" and
throughout the months of hard work, we have considered
you as one playing a crucial and important role. May I
express thanks to you from the whole group.

Very truly yours,
Sarah Webster Fabio

SIDE ONE

1. The Hand That Rocks
2. Sweet Songs (includes a signature poem, "Solemnly
   Mine" by Cyril L. Fabio III) - read by Cyril L. Fabio III.
3. Juju For: Grandma

SIDE TWO

1. Chromo
2. Still, A Red Hot Axe
3. If We Come As Soft Rain
4. Juju/Alchemy of the Blues
5. Juju/Alchemy of the Blues--Instrumental

Sarah Webster Fabio, poet, reading poems by
Sarah Webster Fabio
All poetry with stated exception is the original work of
Sarah Webster Fabio
Musical Compositions are all originals from the combined
efforts of the following: Wayne Wallace, Ronald Fabio,
Denianke (Leon Williams) and Cyril Leslie Fabio III
Musical Directors--Denianke (Leon Williams) and
Wayne Wallace
Narration, male dramatic readings--Thomas Albert Fabio
Technical Assistants--Alice Bruce, Anna Jones,
Bob Clemons, Renee Fabio, Cheryl Fabio, Thomas Fabio
Produced by Sarah Webster Fabio. Co-produced by the
group "Don't Fight The Feeling"
Co-produced and Engineered by Fred F. Cohn

"Don't Fight The Feeling" Band Members:
Wayne Wallace, lead guitar
Denianke (Leon Williams), piano, soprano sax, flute,
tenor sax, alto sax
Ronald Fabio, bass
Cyril Leslie Fabio III, congas
Lawrence E. Vann, drums
Thomas Fabio and Rick Hopton, special effects

JUJU FOR
THE HAND THAT ROCKS
THE CRADLE/
THAT ROCKS THE BOAT

Baby,
Last night when
you called me,
feeling snug,
safe, because
you were 2000
miles away;
giving me that
old line about,
"wish you were here."
Jeezuss,
you've forgotten
I'm of the order
of that bad New Orleans' sister, Marie.
And, I've been known
to have the power.
I mean

I reach out,
touch,
turn
a boat around
in midsea, and
pilot
(him brimming over
like a sinking ship
with memories of
my tender, loving
care)
my man--
as he decides
to come--
right on
back home
to
me.
ONCE MORE,
THE SWEET SONGS
For Carl Mack

Sweet songs, you said,
were gonna come again, My Man,
and didn't they?
Jetted in on a ray of radiance
like the sun
to shine on those in our midst
and the still unborn
in this hour
of our great need.

You prophesied
the return of mandolins and tambourines and tinking bells,
triangles and cymbals, and they sided in on beams
from Pharaoh as I slept,
taking me unaware,
tripping, blowing
my mind.

"SOLEMNLY MINE"
by Cyril Leslie Fabio III

Solemnly mine,
Universal Man,
Thinking, feeling,
loving, teaching, and learning,
rapping with the gods
while soul claps hand
in a communion,
solely mine.

Yeah—
I still hear
Those fun bells,
those we-are-one bells, distant now then near
like a sounding dream,
and I know
soon now the
sweet songs are
gonna pour
like rain
from our love-torn souls one more time.
Yeah,
Yeah,
Yeah.
Right On.
Right On.
One More Time.
Right On.

JUJU FOR GRANDMA
(In Memory of my slave ancestor, Elizabeth Storey, for whom I grandma-sat during my childhood. Born circa 1858: died 1953)

Grandma's talk
was Black talk,
no "jive-ass nigger bit"
but real down-to-earth-hardtimes-and-good-feelings talk.

She made no bones
about it, her spirit was
contained in the little red book
of Gospel Pearls—old songs
of the old-time religion
which brought her and her loved ones through the dark past;
brought love/sorrow to the
crystallization of tears raining blues from her eyes.

She knew she bore
the cross; shared the Christian's curse with Him,
the most beloved yet crucified;
and, in that knowledge, grew
a divine grace which marked
the character of her life.

She was African.
She was slave.
She spoke little
but when she spoke
there was a lot
of knowledge,
of faith, of beauty,
of love, of understanding.

Now, Grandma's talk was strange talk.
Grandma's thoughts though were full, clear;
er ideas were dense.
Grandma's tongue was a double edged sword.
Grandma's words made sense.

"So-so" was always
how she felt, or,
"God willing, tolerable."
She spoke in parables,
"pretty is as pretty does."
She spoke in proverbs too,
"As you sow, so shall you also reap."
She spoke in similes
and metaphors to
objectify the quality
of her being.
"My life is like this old quilt—scraps
and pieces, odd shapes
and colors; but,
a work of love
stitched in time
into a special design—
firm, color fast,
warning to the body
and the soul."

She spoke in riddles,
when we got too close
and were in her hair,
putting us in our places
at a proper distance:
"Mara Saro,
Elizabeth Jane,
Ala Amina Fortune,
Mo:ri ya pen."
She spoke in rhyme
and in tongues unknown,
"Aku Baka, Soda Cracker,
Aku Baka Bo.
Does your mama chew tobacco?
Aku Baka Bo."
She had her numbers
in counting lines which doubled for hide-and-seek games. "Eena, mena, mina mo...
One for the money, two for the show, three to make ready, four to go.
All hid?"
All hid.
All hidden in the mystery of her life which formed the rainbow bridge from our ancestral past to the point where now is already over the hump, and the "in a little while" which forms our tomorrows becomes our yesterdays. All hid.
All hidden in the violation and the void of grandma's world.

Grandma's hands were tender.
Grandma's feet were calloused and tired.
Grandma's eyes were weary.
Grandma's back was sturdy and broad.

Grandma's talk was strange talk.
Grandma's thoughts were dense.

Grandma's tongue was a double-edged sword.
Grandma's words made sense.

Grandma took a life of living hell and through toil, love, faith, human worth, gave it meaning, worked it into common sense.

(From the chapter "Grandma's Talk" in the book Black Talk: Soul/Shield/Sword, Vol. 1 to be published by Doubleday & Co.; recorded on LP album "Jujus/Alchemy of the Blues"

urgent calls;
rescuing our spirits,
souls from precarious ridges
(canyon rimmed and night entombed)

Then,
the morning of our new lives should shower in rainbows.

But,
if rooted in the unfeeling quicksand of the troubled past, we hesitate to move closer to tenderness,

And,
if deafened by the cacophony of the reigning chaos so much so that we only hear the fading echo of our awakening calls and come as night falls—in a vacuum just to fill a void—it is better to not come at all.

Love—
like lode stars—pulls us together toward our eclipses and equinoxes; or else, like shooting meteors speeding by tangentially to flame and fall; burning to ember, leaving so little essence to remember.

"If we come like soft rain—patterning gentle, not raging in torrents—secretly whispering in answer to each other's

CHROMO

Color it blue funk
this sound that tears singing from me in beauty of agony; this colored thing—
so many blues, the hues of my spent days: blue, the eyes of my soul starred in twilight gaze.

Color—
in high tones, low—
this non-harmonic sound full of woe "me" chromo...
chromo... chromo... chromo...

STILL,
A RED HOT AXE

For Johnny Hodges

My Man, yo' axe still yo' blow blown now that you've gone
"Things ain't what they used to be."

For so many years—all my life, I guess, you've been around in the background, acing it with the Duke, doin' yo' tan and beige and black and blues thing.

It's kinda hard to believe, you've gone on to join those other music makers like Otis Redding and Coltrane—leaving us a little more empty now.

But, go right on, My Man, you're the immortal best; you've earned yo' throne and rest.
So, go right on. Take the A train home.

IF WE COME LIKE
SOFT RAIN

If we come like soft rain—patterning gentle, not raging in torrents—secretly whispering in answer to each other's

"If we come like rain, freely, with a downpouring of smiles and/or tears
running breathlessly
in answer to
each other's call,
then come we must.

Or else
we should wish
for each other
the dawn of
brighter suns

JUJU FOR RAY CHARLES
ALCHEMY OF THE BLUES

(For that poet-singer Ray Charles,
the crowning glory written on
his birthday during the
San Francisco Black Expo '72)

"Cry," or
"Baby, don't you Cray,"
you'd croon, and crying
too, in a voice with a crack
you'd keep a whole lotta
Black Mammas from
blowing their stacks.

It's only life and
we all have to
let go with tears,
sometimes, and it
don't even hurt, or if
it hurts, it hurts so good.
Tears, like clocks,
tell you what time
it is and, properly aged,
tears turn jewels.

What turned your
Sweet 'N Sour tears
into gold wasn't:

1. Winning grammy awards
from the National Academy of
Record Arts and Science
in good old Use-Me-Up-Merica.
2. Silver records hurled from the
discs of the colonial motherland.
No, to get on down and give
the drummer some:
1. To yo' Mama, gran'ma, Aun' Jemima
2. To Black ghetto life and the rain/tears/
sun/smiles poured on in heaps everyday
3. To the dudes/brothers/jocks hanging
out on the blocks still with you
4. All those soul sisters who're for you,
even some non-Black ones.

Now, he's ready to have his son blessed
by your truth, all his daughters too.

Who else but you
could cry, hang out tears to dry,
drop tears and then lament that
you'd run out of shoulders to cry on
and brag about how many times you
could cry, and even badmouth
happiness with the conviction that,
"After my laughter come tears."

Heartbreaks fall and aren't healthy
at all when they keep hanging around
too long, so you wised us up to the fact
that if you can let your hair down
and it eases the pain, do it;
if tears falling like rain clear
the air, let it be;
if it takes blues to chase away
the blues, sing your song,
and if it takes something more
to pull yourself together,
than get it on and "Let's go get stoned."

Hoodoo wise, like the holy spirit
moving on sabbath times, Ray's
got a song to tell you what dose
of tears is your thing.

Langston Hughes said, "I've known
rivers...my soul has grown deep like
a river," but who but you could
seriously ask somebody to, "Cry
me a river, 'cause I've cried a
river over you." Or when you begged,
"Don't Cry, Baby" it was all in vain,
when you dropped that sweet suggestion
that after drying tears, "Let's be
sweethearts again." Cry, cry, cry,
Ray, and let some soul rain in.