

VULTURE

5 Artists on the Music That Inspires Them in the Studio, From Fela Kuti to Fiona Apple

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Photo: Getty Images

Music is its own form of creative expression, compositions thoughtfully rendered, used to elicit emotion. Artists have approached the subject quite literally — Picasso and Romare Bearden both riffed on a trio of musicians. Caravaggio rendered Renaissance rockers. Basquiat painted Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. But music also finds its way into the visual works we know and love in more ambient ways. Whether they're looking for inspiration or just a familiar friend, visual artists find themselves turning to music during the creative process. "Music and sound literally lives through my whole practice, and I often hear images before I make them," says Xaviera Simmons. "There is a rhythm to the makeup of the language I use."



With that in mind, Seen asked five artists to choose four songs they feel help set the tone for their studio practice.

Awol Erizku

"Really Love" by D'Angelo

"Energy (Far Away)" by Wizkid ft. Skepta

"Sense Wiseness" by Fela Kuti

"Dog Eat Dog" by the Souljazz Orchestra

Sanford Biggers

“17 Days (acoustic)” by Prince

“I’ve had this record for over 20 years!! It has now been publicly released, so I no longer have any excuse for hoarding it.”

“Oh Sheit It’s X” by Thundercat

“The Sun” by Alice Coltrane

“Moon Medicin” by the Great Escape

Shinique Smith

“Golden” by Jill Scott

“Dream” by Alice Smith

“Extraordinary Machine” by Fiona Apple

“Love Rears Its Ugly Head” by Living Color

Kennedy Yanko

“Shakara” by Fela Kuti

“Special Affair” by the Internet

“Cocaine Model” by Zhu

“Lemon” by N.E.R.D

Derrick Adams

“I Want You” by Erykah Badu

“Can You Feel It” by the Jacksons

“I Love You More” by Rene and Angela

“Try it Out” by Gino Soccio

“10 Times” by YG