

Fatala at Chapter, Cardiff

Rhythm and blues in the African fashion . . .

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEW

ANY discussion of African music these days has to contain a reference to Paul Simon's *Graceland* album.

And it is true that the many groups who had previously sought to touch base with their roots through references to rhythm and blues have now been leaped-frogged to the heart of the matter in the dark continent.

If Simon has done nothing else, through the popularity of his album he has opened the door and provided an audience for visiting African groups.

And a large and enthusiastic audience there was to dance and clap their way through Fatala's concert at Chapter on Friday evening.

Fatala, a group from Guinea, brought on this European tour apparently by a Dutch concern, played African West

Coast music whose irresistible rhythms were based on rhythmically incisive drumming.

I must admit that some of the music sounded as traditionally African as the electric guitar which the group used, so that at times the music sounded as related to village dances as reggae does to calypso.

So the purist in me preferred the strictly vocal with an astounding array of percussion numbers.

No matter. This was infectious music-making and the French exhortations to "dance" needed no repeating, and the dance and movement trained members of the audience added their own spirited entertainment to the performance.