

MULTIMEDIA AND POPULAR MUSIC IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has rich popular music culture. Exponents as well as proficient popular music professionals abound in the country. Side by side highly creative professionals are amateurs that consistently explore their natural endowments. The country's eclecticism in popular music practice, production, utilization and appreciation is quite glaring also. As such, there exist abundant types and species of types of popular music that satisfy different tastes of Nigerian people. These include Euro-American imported/influenced types, those that have African origin and those that have local (Nigerian) origin. The later is further distinguished along tribal, linguistic and cultural areas of Nigeria.

Over the years, popular music exponents and professionals in Nigeria have exploited multimedia resources in varied ways. There is evidence that popular music and musicians have utilized and have been influenced by developments in multimedia resources such as audiovisual products, Computer, sound generators and equipment. Also evident are challenges posed by availability and unavailability of multimedia resources to popular music and musicians.

In this paper, the writer presents an introductory summary of popular music and its assortment in Nigeria as well as focused review of roles of multimedia in popular music in Nigeria. This shall be followed by a survey of challenges, prospects, problems and influences of multimedia on Nigerian popular music. In addition, the paper shall present field research interviews with exponents of Nigerian pop music in order to share their views on their explorations of multimedia resources. Relevant Audiovisual materials will be presented for further clarification of points under discussion.

INTRODUCTION

The word popular or pop (for short) is a term generally used to describe the extent of acceptance of a thing by the public. (Onyeji 2002: 24). Simple definition of popular music distinguishes it as music type that is targeted by the composer and maker to the ordinary man or the general public for immediate appreciation and consumption. Popular music is therefore, a genre of music encompassing several styles, which is readily comprehensible to a large number of the people without much knowledge of music theory or techniques. Quite often such music becomes very popular with the people from

its debut and can be heard at social functions and in the homes of people irrespective of their social classes. The name “popular music”, which is merely descriptive, derives from the “communal” nature of sharing, appreciating and participating to such music.

Practitioners of popular music range from enthusiastic amateurs to versatile exponents. These have gained local, regional, continental and global recognitions. Some popular music exponents and practitioners have, at various times, become household names. As such, intercultural borrowings and relations have been directly and indirectly promoted by and through popular music. Some popular music types have gained local, regional, continental and global recognitions as well as following. Instances include, Afro Juju, Afro Beat, High life, Makosa, Kwaito, Calypso, Raggae, Blues, Disco, Rock, etc.

Popular music in Nigeria is quite varied. Andy Frankel gives a vivid description of music in Nigeria including popular music. He says:

Nigeria is a giant in musical expression. From its hundreds of distinct ethnic groups have come seemingly limitless musical expressions over the course of the last half century. Recordings of everything from pop to traditional music have chronicled the political cultural and stylistic history of a colonial nation, the struggle for self-determination, an emerging nation and the boom and bust of an African giant. Literally, tens of thousands of recordings have been made by record companies, scholars, amateurs, social clubs, broadcasters, cultural centers and a variety of other organizations (2004: 11).

Nigeria is quite eclectic in popular music practice, production, utilization and appreciation. All brands of popular music have some audience, market as well as appreciation in Nigeria. Reflecting on the presence and use of popular music in Nigeria as well as its absence in Nigeria’s music curricular, Okafor is of the view that popular music should be accepted as being valid music, valid in its own right and not second-rate to any other. He is of a strong opinion that institutions of higher learning should find worthy places in their disciplines and curriculum for the study and development of popular music (1992: 11). While global, continental and regional popular music types are performed, appreciated and consumed in Nigeria, there is yet abundant types and species of types of indigenous/local popular music. These are those that have their origin in the different Nigerian culture areas, harnessing/exploiting cultural, social and political lives of the people in various sonic forms and languages. Exponents and performers of such music are quite numerous also. ‘Pop’ orchestras [in Nigeria] use the same instruments as their counterparts in any other part of the world. And they continue to update their equipments as fast as sound and instrument technology can produce them. To these may be added one or two traditional drums for rhythm and melorhythm effects (Nzewi 1991: 146). Popular music in contemporary Nigeria relies heavily on electronic/mass media for its dissemination as little or no live performances are staged. On-the-spot count of popular music types heard and enjoyed in Nigeria would include, but not in any way limited to, Disco, Reggae, Rhythm and blues, Funk, Calypso, Makosa, Highlife, Soul, Latin American Chachacha, Mambo, Tango, Rumba, Kwaito, Rock and Roll, Rock, Juju, Kalangu, Afrobeat, Were, Waka, Fuji, Sakara, Afro Juju, Apala, Gospel pops, Rap music, etc.

This paper shall present summaries of a selection of the indigenous/local types of popular music in Nigeria, as well as highlight some of the exponents and performers. In addition, the paper will survey application of multimedia resources by popular music exponents and performers in Nigeria in general.

POPULAR MUSIC IN NIGERIA: A SELECTION

In this section of the presentation, summaries of a selection of popular music types in Nigeria will be given to highlight their features, performance norms and exponents. Detailed presentation on popular music as well as enumeration of existing popular music styles and types in Nigeria will entail a huge research work, which lies outside the focus and scope of this work. The nature and scope of the present work constrains brief summaries on a selection of popular music indigenous to Nigeria. While Nigeria showcases all popular genres from the global to the local styles, attention will be focused on some local pop music types that are yet to receive intercontinental attention to further popularize them beyond their local cocoons. No specific issues or preferences guide such selections. Rather selections are randomly made to reflect stylistic distinctions as well as popularity across cultural and social communities. Three examples will be used for the purposes of this work.

AFRO BEAT

This is one of Nigeria's creative forms from among the great constellation of highly talented artistes in the country. The exponent cum originator of this brand of popular music is indisputably, the self-styled music cum political hero, Fela Anikulakpo Kuti. Although Fela gave life and popularity to Afrobeat, it is believed that he pulled ahead of some other African musicians who were working their way through similar fusions of highlife, jazz, rock, and rhythm and blues. Some such musicians are Jerry Hansen's Ramblers and Stan Plange's Uhuru Dance Band from Ghana, Geraldo Pino's Heartbeats and O.J. Ekemode's Modern Aces from Nigeria and Ignace DeSouza's Black Santiagos from Togo (Veal 2004: 33). Fela, a graduate of Trinity College of Music, London, expressed his creative genius in Afrobeat, which literally means African beat. Prior to the conception and unearthing of Afrobeat, with all its stylistic distinctions, Fela had performed much jazz owing to his classical training.

Afrobeat (is) a musical genre combining highlife, jazz and traditional African tunes, producing a pulsating, heavy rhythm laden with soul-stirring socio-political yabis (message) (Ajirire1992: 16). Afrobeat as played by Fela was a political music obviously rooted in the highlife tradition, but stretched far beyond the parameters of that genre. It was jazzy but not virtuosic; it was funk, but not frivolous (Veal 2004: 30). From whichever angle Fela's Afrobeat is looked at, it at once presents musical distinctions that mark it out as a unique and authentic popular music genre. Its striking characteristics include long drawn repetition of musical themes by the band often suggesting obstinacy on the part of the musicians, forcing the audience to appreciate the music the way it is or leave it, if not go to hell. Solo renditions of saxophone in almost speech-song style as well as in a somewhat conflicting relationship with the background music also

characterizes the music. An integral part of the music is the use of inciting, derogatory and satiric political texts that are rendered in “hoarse” voice, interspersed with chorus responses by back up singers. While contributions by the band members are acknowledged, it is evident from available Afrobeat music that Fela dominates the ensemble, doing the vocal and instrumental solos exclusively. Such orchestral structure is easily traced to his formative years as a classical musician and jazz player where star mentality is quite pronounced. Much polyphony as well as polyrhythm is dominantly used in Afrobeat. Although Afrobeat places emphasis on the messages contained in the text the music is quite scintillating and danceable.

Some Afrobeat songs by Fela are Jeun Kooku; Zombie; Vagabomd in Power; Authority Stealing; Original Suffer head; Big Blind Country (BBC); Beasts of No nation (BONN); Overtake Don Overtake Overtake (ODOO); etc. Fela’s passing away marks the end of his own brand of Afrobeat but the beat goes on in the hands of his son Femi Kuti and some other Nigerian musicians.

KALANGU

A pre-Islamic social music of the Hausa speaking people, Kalangu is one of the three popular music of northern Nigeria. The others are Bori and Goje music. Kalangu remains the most popular and the most patronized by the Hausa-speaking Nigerians (Ajirire1992: 81). Kalangu is performed in different social and political settings such as wedding, naming ceremonies and in the palace of the Emirs. The musical instruments for the performance of Kalangu consist of Hausa native flute, tom tom, trumpet and calabash drums. These accompany Kalangu songs. Instances of ingenious restructuring of Kalangu music for performance by one artiste also exist. A well-known exponent of this is Dan Maraya. In such solo performance the player uses a string instrument called Kutigi.

Lyrics of kalangu music are an admixture of native philosophical thoughts of the Hausa-Fulani, traditional folklores and Islamic motifs.

Used mainly for eulogizing the nobles and the cultural attributes of the Hausas, Kalangu also serves as the twin-vehicle of political education and social engineering (Ajirire1992: 81).

Well known Kalangu musicians are Alhaji Mamman Shata, Alhaji Dan Kwairo and Alhaji Sanni Dandawo.

JUJU MUSIC

Juju as a word carries different socio-cultural meanings. In the European societies it conjures ghoulish, fetish and ritualistic practices of African peoples. Similarly, juju is the borrowed psychedelic name for amulets that possess supernatural potency in the African context. Whatever the connotation of the word in different societies, juju connotes and conveys music among the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria today. The name for the music was contextually adopted when Tunde King performed at the funeral rites of Akintola Sapara, a renowned Lagos herbalist that was dubbed juju man by the then colonial masters. Associating the music to the context of its first performance produced the contentious name. Juju, a celebration and exultation music of the Yoruba, extols the

rich cultural life of the people on such socio-cultural events as naming, burial, coronation and wedding ceremonies.

Played by a band of about 10 persons including vocalists and instrumentalists, original Juju music was devoid of heavy instrumentation. Rather it was an amalgamation of the sonorous voice of the lead vocalist, loud chorus of the back up singers and such native percussive instruments and effects like the dundun and kumbe drums, agidigbo, sekere and agogo (Ajirire1992: 20-21).

Juju music has changed greatly in recent times, incorporating modern electronic instruments and gadgets. One of the new forms of Juju music is Afro-juju, the brainchild of Shina Peters, which employs heavy percussive sounds and loud singing in very fast tempo. Well-known Juju stars are Ayinde Bakare, Julius Araba, Ade Ade, Tunde Nightingale, I. K. Dairo, Dele Ojo, Ebenezer Obey, Sunny Ade, Segun Adewale, Dele Abiodun, etc.

MULTIMEDIA

The term multimedia describes a number of diverse technologies that allow visual and audio media to be combined in new ways for the purpose of communicating. Applications include entertainment, education and advertising. Multimedia often refers to computer technologies. Nearly every PC built today is capable of multimedia because they include a CD-ROM or DVD drive, and a good sound and video card (often built into the mother board). But the term multimedia also describes a number of dedicated media appliances, such as digital video recorders (DVRs), interactive television, MP3 players, advanced wireless devices and public video displays. (<http://www.scala.com/multimedia/multimedia-definition.html>)

Multimedia has come to stay in Nigeria for popular music production promotion and dissemination. At the moment, multimedia resources for pop music in Nigeria include such audiovisual equipment and gadgets that enhance recording and commercial promotions of popular music. Videocassette tapes, Video CDs, DVD (in recent time), computer, are multimedia resources that are currently used to package popular music in Nigeria. These gadgets are found in different homes, public places and offices. Of all though, the videocassette tapes and VCDs are the most common. These combine audio and visual materials in a unified form for entertainment, education, information, as well as for commercial purposes.

Importation of technology for popular music production into Nigeria is steady as such technology is produced. Pop musicians have exploited the interface and synergy of these multimedia resources for commercial purposes. Audio and visual (movement, colours, graphics) materials have been employed for maximum commercial results. The potential of multimedia in the commercialization and marketing of popular music has led to the churning out of a large number of audiovisual (video) clips by popular musicians in Nigeria. These come in two main formats- VHS tapes and video CDs. The latest audiovisual technology (DVD) shall soon be common and available to the general public.

The rise in the production and marketing of popular music by these media is associated to the low rate of live performances as well as the interest of the public to see or know the artiste, his band and style, including dance. These video clips become cheap and immediate alternatives to live performances. They also ensure longer life span for the performances recorded on them. To some extent, they are forms of preserving the music and the visual materials.

PRODUCTION PROCESS/TYPES

The process of producing such works will, normally, be thus. A studio recording of the music will be done first. This will, normally, employ all possible sound generators and sequencers, sound modifiers cum enhancers until the artiste(s) and the producers(s) are satisfied. Different computer programs are utilized for this. This will then be edited and mixed unto a master tape or CD from which copies could be made. The music is then taken to a video producer who will write a script for the music tracks. Sometimes also, the pop artiste would do it himself. The script will determine the locations for the production as well as personnel, equipment and props to be used. Sometimes it is very complex, requiring large amount of props, performers, several rehearsals, equipment (video cameras, microphones, cables), costumes, dances, drama sketches, lyrics, spoken lines, super-imposition of texts, pictures, motions, scenes, creative imagination, etc. On the average, most pop musicians go for cheap production to reduce cost. Sometimes on the spot recording is done with one quick rehearsal to cut down cost. The sound tracks will normally be used as background music during location recording to ensure optimum synchronization of pictures and music. In essence, performers merely mime the lines along with the background music. After such field/location filming has been done, the recording is then taken to a film studio for animation, synchronization of spoken lines with motion pictures as well as structural editing, enhancement cum refinement, corrections and modifications. Then there will be the final mixing with the sound tracks.

Whatever the extent of creativity and the quality of such productions, it does appear that most Nigerian artistes now pay more attention to the visual than the music it seeks to promote. Some of the works appear to be home movies or film with the pop music as sound track. Sometimes also, there are no clear relationship between the music and the visual material packaged in the multimedia. Audiovisual media have been exploited more for the satisfaction of the craving of the public for what they can see.

In Nigeria as in other countries, the popular music is sold simultaneously as an audio material as well as an audiovisual material utilizing multimedia.

Another form of application of multimedia in popular music production is what I call "frozen multimedia." This is the application of multimedia on record sleeves (video, VCD) and jackets. On these are expressed in graphic/visual form some motivating information and pictures that promote commercial goals of the production. These are carefully produced to attract and induce one to purchase and listen to the music. This form of multimedia, though underlying, is worth noting.

PROBLEMS OF MULTIMEDIA ON POPULAR MUSIC/MUSICIANS IN NIGERIA

Application of multimedia as discussed above has been quite contributive to the low rate of live performances and acquisition of skills on musical instruments by pop musicians in Nigeria. Most contemporary pop stars do not play any instrument unlike in the 70s and 80s when they needed to rehearse and be in top form in order to give promotional concerts for their music that have also been recorded through live playing and analog recording equipment. A large number of popular musicians in Nigeria today depend on multimedia for the promotion of their works at the expense of skill acquisition on musical instruments. As such popular music productions from the point of music creativity have increasingly been of poor quality on the average, as many pop musicians lack originality as well as creative drive. Theirs seem to be to run to the studio and run out with any work no matter how poorly produced, using what technology has made available in the studios. Due to lack of creativity and technological know how, these gadgets are, sometimes, not properly utilized. Quite often also, most pop musicians adapt old tunes to new arrangements or simply copy any music that is popular at the point in time.

ROLES OF MULTIMEDIA

In general, multimedia resources have been applied to much commercial success by pop artistes, to the extent that some otherwise obscure artistes such as Daddy Showkey Lagbaja and Baba Fryo have come to limelight through recordings of video clips for their music. At the moment, every pop artiste (including gospel singers) does not count his/her productions completed without a video clip that will project the work in multimedia form. The amount of creativity and perhaps the amount of money invested on the production determines the quality and to a large extent, the acceptance and popularity of the work among the people. Employment of multimedia resources in audiovisual perspectives has afforded pop musicians and the music opportunity for greater reach and popularity within and outside the Nigerian context. It has also formed an indispensable infrastructure that motivates creativity in the artiste and producers as well as it is a link between the missing or very low live performances and the desire of pop music audience. Multimedia has afforded pop musicians the opportunity to take their music right to the sitting room and bedrooms of their audiences almost in live show form.

Multimedia has been applied to popular music in Nigeria more for the promotion and enhanced commercial results than it is of essence to the development of pop music skills and creativity. However, it is arguable that because it places pop musicians and their music before their audience through audiovisual media, there is underlying motivation to strive to meet up to the expectations of the people.

Popular musicians in Nigeria have exploited the synergies as well as interface of multimedia from the days of analog recording to the colour motion pictures and to the now sophisticated and psychedelic digital remote technology of modern times.

Modern day laser technology has placed before popular musicians highest resolution multimedia resources that have superlatively improved upon the cyber world of make belief. The digital/cyber world of high fidelity sounds and mega pixels of modern visual technology have also been combined to give popular music in Nigeria a boost in recent times. At the moment, popular music in Nigeria relies heavily on multimedia for its dissemination as little or no live shows are presented. These come in VHS and VCD formats. These two are quite common in the country. In the Nigerian context therefore, multimedia plays very important roles. They also ensure longer life span for the performances recorded on them. To some extent, they are forms of preservation the music and the visual materials.

FROM SOME NIGERIAN POP STARS

In a brief discussion with Mr Mike Ejeagha (a popular minstrelsy musician) and Oliver de Coque (a popular highlife musician), the two musicians corroborated and confirmed the effectiveness of multimedia in the promotion and marketing of their works and those of other musicians. They say multimedia enhances production packages and delivers to the audience the work in audiovisual forms right to their homes. They believe digital recordings employing multimedia is significant to the development of the skills of the artiste as well as the quality of their productions. They also acknowledge the negative influence of multimedia on young pop musicians. They accept that because multimedia has made available to the musicians a lot of creative resources and virtual sounds, most pop musicians do not bother to be skillful on any instrument or create from their natural stock.

MULTIMEDIA AND POPULAR MUSIC IN NIGERIA: SOME CHALLENGES

Some of the challenges of multimedia in popular music in Nigeria include finance and originality.

Many pop artistes lack financial resources to adequately produce multimedia versions of their music. Even when some do have enough financial resources they are hesitant to invest so much as they may not get their money back from the sales. Until lately, most recording and film studios could not afford latest technologies that would produce top quality multimedia works. There is also the challenge of having knowledge of the application and use of some of the technological equipment available for multimedia. Sometimes some of the equipment are available but underutilized.

It is noticeable that due to lack of sound knowledge of multimedia equipment or financial constraints, many poor multimedia productions have been done for popular music. Quite often artistes are in a hurry to bring the work out for marketing and so many things are done haphazardly. Examples of works in which spoken (mimes) passages of the performers do not synchronize with the recorded sounds abound. In some cases also monotonous use of one scene occurs as a result of the artiste's inability to pay for the use of different locations. Most studios do not have recent high quality multimedia gadgets for optimal production. Old version cameras and editing machines are still in use. In

general, Nigerian artistes believe that whatever is packaged in multimedia form will be bought anyway. But, the Nigeria pop music audience is able to discern between good and bad quality work. It is a great challenge for popular musicians in Nigeria to devote time, resources and creative skills and imagination to the production of high quality multimedia works for popular music as well as match high quality visual productions with high quality pop music creativity with unique stylistic distinctions and originality.

CONCLUSION

It could be said that multimedia is a must for Nigerian popular music, as it has come to stay as a significant type of promotion and strategy for commercialization of the music. In addition to providing entertainment to the audience, it provides underlying creative motivation for pop music skills and creativity. In the Nigerian context however, undue attention has been paid to multimedia as a means of filling the gap existing between the poor quality of most works and the expectations of pop music audience. Generally too, multimedia has been employed by pop musicians to fill the gap created by low or non-existence of live performances. Multimedia has been of creative essence to Nigerian popular music and musicians in general but awaits development and proper utilization.

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