

## A Discourse on the Problems Facing Music Business in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Music and the entertainment industry in general are one of the major sources of income and sustainers of the economy in advanced countries of the world. In recent times in Nigeria, music business and the entertainment industry as a whole has witnessed lull in their activities. The industry is fraught with multifarious problems stemming from politics, economic, social, marketing, technology and other environmental constraints. This paper examines the role of music and the entertainment industry as an important but, neglected arm of the Nigerian economy that can rescue it from its present economic predicaments. It discusses the state of art music, commercial and popular music in Nigeria groaning under a depleted economy. It also proffers solutions to the problems highlighted in the paper.*

### Introduction

It is a truism that the world was recently enmeshed in one economic problem or the other – from the Arab spring, Euro-crisis, famine, wars, terrorism and unemployment in Africa and others; it is an endless catalogues of economic woes. Nigeria as a country is not insulated from the world economic crises. The depression in the Nigerian economy had rubbed on all its sectors, music inclusive. Music business in Nigeria has passed through many phases. From the early developmental and experimental stages in the hands of the major exponents and practitioners to the contemporary times, music enterprises have thrived in an abyss of hopelessness. According to Shaka (2012);

The entertainment industry in Nigeria is a multi-billion Naira industry which provides gainful employment to teeming millions of Nigerian youths who would otherwise be without jobs and would have become ready recruits into armed robbery, prostitution, religious fundamentalism, youth militancy, cultism, and so on. This grossly unappreciated sector which occasionally attracts lip-service from the federal government when the need arises for rebranding or whitewashing of our jaded collective psyche is reputedly second in ranking to the oil and gas sector, in terms of contribution to the national economy (p. 79).

At its evolutionary stage, Nigerian commercial music had taken its roots from the indigenous music of the people–derived and used for secular and sacred purposes. Some typologies are socio-religious in nature such as: Waka, Fuji, Apala and others developed due to the influence of Islam, while art music developed from the influences of the Christian missionaries, who made contributions to Christian liturgies. Other credible sources that are responsible for the growth of the music industry at the early stage are the emacipados, martial and band music and so on (Emielu, 2005; Collins, 1977; Euba, 1965; Smith, 1964).

At independence, Nigeria had an agriculture driven economy and a little while after this, it was buoyed by the discovery of oil. The development in all spheres of the economy

also rubbed on music and the entertainment industry as a whole; musicians enjoyed both local and international patronage, new recording outfits sprung up, musical instruments and accessories were categorized under duty free items by the government and there was conducive environment for music business to flourish. The oil boom years were characterized by gross mismanagement, profligate spending, greed, lack of proper planning, instability and incessant military incursion into civil government resulting in serious economic problems with its attendant effect on music business.

In terms of scope, this paper shall focus on popular and art music business in a depressed economy looking at such contributory factors like the political, sociological, marketing strategy, enabling act and environment and examining their effects on the stakeholders in the industry like the musicians, promoters, recording industry, the buying public and other active players in the field like The Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON), The Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) and so on. Ajirire *et al.* (1992) opine that:

The Nigerian music scene is not all glitter and glamour; beneath the façade of this glittering razzmatazz is a litany of simmering problem ranging from songwriting to piracy. Perhaps, the greatest enemy of the Nigerian musicians is the musician himself. Probably out of arrogance or selfishness, the musician in his infinite wisdom usually acts as his own songwriter, composer, singer, instrumentalist, arranger, recording engineer and producer. The result of this in most cases is a fiasco, a miasma of half-baked, haphazardly produced record. Maybe out of ignorance, greed or both, the Nigerian musician often fails to utilize the services of a good business manager-cum-publicist. Unlike his foreign counterpart, the musician still regards the manager or the image-maker as an unnecessary luxury (p. 132).

In furtherance to the above quotation, the questions to be answered in the paper include: (a) What can be done to regain the lost glory of the Nigerian music industry? (b) Can the Nigerian music industry rescue the country from its present economic predicaments (c) Can the music industry in Nigerian compete favourably with others in the advanced economies? (d) What are the necessary structures to be put in place, act to be enacted and the roles important of stakeholders in the resuscitation of the Nigerian music industry? Theoretical framework for this study is derived from Fiske's (1994) discussion on popular economy. He opines that:

The domain of entertainment is one of pleasures, meanings, and social identity: if this domain cannot maintain and promote the power of the subordinate to be different, there will be severely reduced motivation for change in the political domain (Fiske, 1994, p. 511).

In furtherance to the above, the balance between the popular, social and political domains and others issues will be discussed in the course of this study.

### **The Nigerian Music Industry**

In the midst of want, misery and economic problems confronting the country, the music industry has been able to survive despite all odds, it has thrived, offering employments to many of the gifted and the talented youths of the country. Loko (2009) opines that:

Music industry on the other hand is the totality of complex relationships existing among its various sub-sectors. The recording industry on the other hand is a part of the music industry solely responsible for the production and manufacturing of mass cultural products for the market via industrial processing, i.e. records, CDS and Cassettes (p. 24).

If an assessment of the music industry were to be based on the number of records, compact disc, cassettes etc. churned out in their thousands by the artiste and the promotional tours organized by companies, one would be living in a deluded mirage. It is an illusion to believe all is well in the industry. There are many problems fraught the entertainment industry in Nigeria. Some of these include; Piracy, lack of enabling act to protect works, lack of adequate enlightenment, poor packaging of recorded works, instability and insecurity, harsh economic policies, poor marketing strategies and others. Passman (1995) says that the hallmark of any good music business lies in sound management of human and musical resources. Diri (1983) took a critical look at the entertainment industry years back and observed that;

The Nigeria music scene has witnessed the seemingly endless proliferation of singers some of whom can at best be described as musical jokers, adventures, and manifested plagiarist (p. 5).

In the same vein Euba (1988) also argues that:

The comparative slow progress, which Nigerians have made on the international scene, has not been due to a lack of talented and competent musicians but to inadequate facilities, poor recorded expertise, and indifferent marketing and promotional strategies (p. 138).

In recent time, Nigerian youngsters have carved a niche for themselves through music. One cannot but, talk about the emerging 'Naija hip-hop' music which has transverse all the nook and cranny of the country and beyond. However, most of the records released into the Nigerian market are of low standard when compared with the same at the international level.

The Nigerian musicians rush to the studio to record music full of vulgarious, un-couth and bawdy texts while obscene video clips are promoted at the expense of musical contents, mellifluous sound, good instrumentation which are relegated to the background. The art music and have distanced themselves from the society that begets them and which they represent. Art music business and practice in Nigeria has been mystified, shrouded and coded in difficult language that the immediate society can decipher and participate in it. Though art music world over maintains a toga of eliticism, the Nigerian art musician and music scene are yet to fully integrate and positively affect the commercial musicians and the society at large. The federal government would rather deal directly with the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) rather than consulting in some cases the academic musicians.

Non standardization, unethical and unwholesome practices, bickering and squabbles among artiste and non-professionalization of the industry allows mediocre and those without in-depth knowledge of the art and practice of music into the industry. Most popular musicians do not pass through enough apprentice schemes before setting out to

form their band and wax records, perhaps because of the harsh economic situation in the country. Most unemployed, never do well people have found solace in music (especially commercial music) and once they are able to record a single hit, they make millions and live like megastars and afterwards fade away from the scene for many years. Records that are improperly arranged, produced and devoid of creativity cannot stand the test of time and compete favourably with the international standards.

Lo-Bamijoko (1993) states that:

The music industry in Nigeria is a loose-end organization, which has been taken over completely by non-professionally trained people. The artistes indeed have no clear idea on how to build and sustain the industry because of that ever-present vacuum which they cannot fill; the absence of a foundation on which to build. Without a foundation, nothing stands. This is why what we regard as the music industry in Nigeria; is really not an industry. It has not fulfilled all the requirements to qualify it as one (p. 3).

In agreement with the statement by Lo-Bamijoko, creativity, sound technical knowledge, up to date facilities and good management of human, musical and material resources are the necessary criteria to move the Nigeria music industry forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the numerous problems enumerated, there is hope for the survival of the Nigeria music industry.

### **Sustaining Music Business in Nigeria**

In a country where lives and properties are not safe, people are assassinated, maimed, attacked at will and inter ethnic and religious wars are started at the slightest provocations, area boys make life difficult for artiste at shows, even shows staged and promoted by multinationals are not spared then, the entertainment industry may be doomed and facing extinction. Nothing thrives and works in the midst of chaos and confusion. Government should secure the environment and engage, as well as give the unemployed, restive youth jobs through it numerous agencies so that all segment of the economy (music inclusive) can grow in a peaceful atmosphere for 'an idle hand is the devil's workshop'.

The Nigerian government over the years has reformed all reformables (NEPA, Nitel, Civil Service, and ban the importation of some goods etc.). This spirit engulfing the nation should be extended to the music industry.

Government should look at the influx of foreign records coming into the country, so that local music can have more values and be appreciated by the people. In the same vein, media houses should be compelled to pay some royalty to musicians from the rights accrued from their music played on air. Enabling laws should be formulated to checkmate piracy and other dubious acts denying musicians rewards for their creativity. Okafor (1986) opines that:

Popular music can contribute faster to the overall national economy than other types of music and therefore investment in the development of its quality would be viable. Another thing is that, the copyright law requires a lot of reviews in order to give protection to genuine art (pp. 20-21).

Due to the harsh economic condition, most of the recording outfits and studios like Phonodisk, Emi, Sony, Klink and others have fizzled out. Though there are new ones on the scene, the required expertise to produce world class music are still not there. Government should create an enabling environment and remove heavy tax on musical accessories, gadgets and instruments so that the needed technology obtainable in other advanced economy of the world can be procured for the growth of our entertainment industry.

Darah (1989) says popular music is part of the heritage of oral tradition transmitted via technological mass media. Music schools in universities and conservatories (MUSON Centre) should be encouraged to conduct research into the genuine Nigerian music evolving from the indigenous music for export to other land rather than copying foreign music from abroad. For the music industry in Nigeria and Africa to excel, popular artistes should be encouraged to undergo formal music training.

### **Conclusion**

The business of music in Nigeria and Africa can be brought to higher pedestals if government and other active participants in the industry play their roles well. Government should see the entertainment industry as an important sector of the economy that can positively affect the country's economic status in the comity of nations. In this regard, the entertainment industry in Nigeria should be grateful to the government of President Jonathan who intervened by giving some financial assistance to the sector. He said:

I recognize the role of entertainment industry in the Nigerian economy and this government will support an industry that makes Nigerian happy. I have given them direct order to make sure entertainers have \$200 million worth of loan to work with. Make more movies, write and produce more hit songs, provide jobs and give hope to our people... (Jonathan, 2010).

It is hoped that with the grant made available to the industry and its prudent and judicious disbursement most of the problems confronting the sector can be overcome. However, artistes, promoters, engineers, managers, media houses and others involved in the industry must close their ranks so that the industry can move forward and for solid foundation to be laid for future generation and posterity.

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