

## FUNCTIONS OF THE MUSIC RECORDING INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

**Loko, Olugbenga Olanrewaju**

Department of Theatre Arts & Music  
Lagos State University  
Ojo - Lagos

### **ABSTRACT**

The paper discusses functions of the music recording industry in Nigeria and ways in which the industry contributes to the socio-political and economic growth of Nigerians. The paper is based on ethnographic research conducted in several cities in Nigeria on the challenges of music recording industry in Nigeria from 1940 to 2000. The first section is introduction. The second section listed and discussed four important functions of the industry during the period and also examined some issues pertinent to the identified functions and third section is the conclusion.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Popular music in Nigeria and its attendant socio-political and economic implications has attracted scholarly discourses. Music scholars, critics, journalists and non music scholars alike engage themselves more on socio-political and economic issues when popular music is discussed in Nigeria. Not much critical and scholarly study on the functions of music recording industry in Nigeria exists. It is against this backdrop of critical discourses on popular music that this paper examines the music recording industry in Nigeria with particular reference to the functions of the industry in Nigeria between 1940 and 2000. According to Baskerville (1970), Collins (1988), Euba (1988), Graham (1989), and Omibiyi (1989), the recording industry is a part of the music industry solely responsible for the production and manufacturing of mass cultural musical products for the market via industrial processing of records, CDS, and cassettes. Implicitly the recording industry is central to the activities of the music industry such that it dominates the whole music industry. Arguably the industry is relevant as a key factor in the realization of the composite sense of the music industry realism globally and as well in Nigeria's music business and practice. This therefore underscores the need for further analytical studies on the music recording industry in Nigeria. Although the paper examines the functions of music recording industry in Nigeria from 1940 to 2000, it is equally important to pay attention on the new trends in the industry today.

The paper is guided by the theoretical perspective of functional theory and combining content analysis of representative examples of recorded music, the paper identifies four functions of the music recording industry in Nigeria namely: Economic, Social,

Entertainment and Information functions and ways in which they contribute to the socio-political and economic stability in Nigeria.

It has been several decades of successful recording activities in Nigeria and all through the industry's history in Nigeria, musicians and artists in the industry have been able to achieve artistic and social breakthrough. Undaunted by various challenges encountered in their communities and recording studios, they turned their minds and energy towards composing, producing and recording songs to inform, educate, eulogize and address other socio-political and economic problems. Through their untiring efforts they contributed to the creation of a distinct Nigerian music. Though fame has remained a long enduring bottom-line, the emergence and flowering of new styles of music has remained a long enduring legacy bequeathed to the Nigerian populace and the mainstream of global music. Apart from these, Nigerian artists have also achieved some level of successes in the area of self owned labels. Findings showed that renowned musicians and artists who felt cheated by other recording companies in the payment of royalties for their works as at when due, breach of contract, poor recording studio facilities and other disagreements established their own record labels and studios primarily for artistic excellence and development. The significance of this is in their contribution to the establishment of more labels and recording studios. Taking into cognizance all the foregoing, artists and musicians have contributed positively to the growth of the industry. It offers a unique opportunity to examine the functions of the music recording industry in Nigeria

In this paper, four important functions of the industry within the Nigerian society are identified and examined. These are economic, social, entertainment and information functions.

### **Functions**

Simon (1989) listed four functions inherent in mass cultural activities: they are economic, social, entertainment and information. Congruently, the approach used in this paper identifies these functions within the mainstream of the recording industry and its concomitant socio-economic implications.

### **Economic Function:**

Like elsewhere in the world, the economic activities generated in the music recording industry are of immense value. From its inception the Nigerian Recording industry has shown the primacy of the economic aspect of its activities. A lot of human and financial capitals were injected and expended on the industry which encouraged artistic expression and new stylistic patterns. Because of the financial gains involved, the companies adopted experimental attitude of signing on artists and musicians who were mostly naïve and prone to being used and exploited.

The industry became capital intensive at this point because of the introduction of new recording equipment and techniques. The 4-track equipment introduced by Phillips (W.A) Ltd was replaced by the 8-track one by EMI; ARC introduced the 16-track and Phonodisk, Recordisc, and Tabansi introduced the 24-track; introduced recently are the digital 'State of

the Arts' recording equipment. This modernization of equipment greatly impacted the industry and facilitated growth and development. The industry became recording destination for artists and musicians from the neighbouring West African countries. Prior to this, Nigerian musicians and artists travelled to Ghana and overseas for their recordings. But, with this development, there was no need for Nigerian artists and musicians to travel abroad for the recording of their music as the facilities needed for recording were available locally.

By 1960s much capital was invested in building studios and pressing plants such that by 1974, there were 3 major record companies, 12 recording studios, 2 major indigenous labels and over 50 small local labels which produced a variety of Nigerian music. This transformation made Nigeria the largest music market in black Africa supporting a record market of several millions during the 1970s and the 1980s. Today, there are numerous recording studios both digital and analogue in all the major cities and several modern pressing plants are located in Lagos, Onitsha, Port-Harcourt and other cities.

Nigerian artists and musicians made the most immediate impact in the recording industry. First, millions of Nigerian records of varied stylistic patterns; *juju*, *highlife*, *ikwokilikwo*, *asiko*, among others were produced and sold (Omibiyi, 1981). By 1974, 10 million albums by various Nigerian artists and musicians were produced and sold. 12 million albums by 1979 and 20 million albums by the 1980s were also produced and sold. This produced several local and national stars who became celebrities. Certain expectations are raised which were heightened by the form of financial package and promotion that were attached to such celebrities. Several concerts, shows, media advertisements and performer-audience chain (Wallis and Malm, 1984) were produced by various Nigerian artists and musicians for the purpose of attracting fee paying audience for shows and entertainment. Several Nigerian musicians and artists enjoyed this pedigree, among such were Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Dizzy K. Falola, Nico Mbarga, Johnny Haastrup, Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, Sonny Okosun, The Ofeges, Mandators and Kris Okotie among others.

In the economic sense, the global emergence of the recording industry no doubt has had tremendous impact on the activities within the music industry. Its growth has been dependent purely on its economic gains, and the maximization of profit becomes its prime motivation. For obvious economic reasons, the industry promotes and supports only artists and musicians, works or materials that have proved successful or important stabilizing factor in its mode of operation within the society.

### **Social Function:**

Socially, the industry offers opportunity to a large number of people at various levels within the Nigerian state, irrespective of age, gender, and educational background. The economic activities generated by the recording industry created new occupational opportunities; record distributors, craftsmen, music retailers, music entrepreneurs, promoters, directors and managers were needed to work within the system. Opportunity for wage labour of less physical exertion existed especially for creative people such as artists, musicians, producers and sound engineers. As the activities in the recording industry became more intense and lucrative many of the stakeholders were needed in large numbers to meet the ever increasing

demand of records for home and foreign entertainment. All these gave greater incentive to Nigerian musicians and artists. New stylistic patterns including Reggae, *Juju*, Makossa, Sookus, Highlife, *Ikwokilikwo*, Afrobeat, and *Sakara* among others were introduced with success. *Fuji*, Folkloric songs, *Apala* and particularly *Juju* music and Afrobeat became popular for the international market.

All these attest to the fact that the industry contributed to the socio-economic growth of Nigerians and the society. However, the involvement of 'all and sundry' (Dennis 2003) within the system, perhaps in line with Simon's (1989) description of African mass cultural festivals, is apparently due to two fundamental reasons. It is a non restrictive activity that is open to virtually all Nigerians and foreigners. It attracts each year, many people, both young and old, from 'all walks of life' - students, housewives, pastors, and touts among others. There were no severe demands on the participants with regard to background knowledge or learning.

### **Entertainment Function:**

In its role as entertainment industry, the music recording industry, as indicated earlier, mediated changes in stylistic patterns and in tastes. Music performances began to be organized as paid shows and gigs. In the course of performances (shows, gigs) a performer-audience chain is developed and sustained through the encouragement of various forms of audience participation and responses solely to encourage, entrench and establish a level/pedigree of identification between the performer 'star' and the audience. It is true that while making musical/cultural heroes out of performers the industry was also exploiting both the performers and the public economically. In the same vein, the industry vis-à-vis the above-mentioned process also has in some instances unintentionally created non-conventional, deviant social types, which make them an acceptable and marketable commodity within the society. Their records were required in greater quantity to meet the increasing demand of Nigerians. In my opinion Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Johnny Haastrup, and Majek Fasek were deviant types. While Johnny Haastrup's shaven head and mode of dressing was bizarre. Fela and Majek took to hard drugs; samples of deviant behaviours.

The newly evolved genres as mentioned earlier began to exert overwhelming influence on Nigerians and competed with the indigenous genres. In fact, the new genres became increasingly popular among Nigerians. A number of newly recorded music genres that emerged as a result of other imported records such as highlife, *ikwokilikwo*, Afrobeat, makossa among others emerged and subsequently grew in popularity (Omibiyi, 1981). There developed a tendency among Nigerians to reject the communal entertainment making, it became anachronistic. Music making became a highly commercialized creative work, which became more profitable and more dignified. All these gave greater incentive to the artists, musicians and their producers as well.

While it is true that the industry has overt positive functions in the society, the desire by the record industry to concentrate on commercial type of music led to the neglect of communal entertainment. Also its concept and cultivation of popular music led gradually to the neglect of traditional music. The craving for the 'new music' on lacquer produced by record

companies made the recordings to begin to compete with traditional recreational facilities and it became more attractive while traditional entertainment facilities received less attention. The point being emphasized here is that the western derived new stylistic patterns did not totally displace or obliterate the indigenous music in the society, they existed along side each other. However, more attention was given to the new styles of music to the detriment of the indigenous music.

### **Information Function:**

The recorded works made it easy for music to be used effectively as a medium of public information, vehicle for social mobilization, political campaigns and as sources of historical/cultural information. Omibiyi (1985) noted that various themes covering a wide range of issues bordering on social, economic and political issues have been chronicled in recorded works. The various themes addressed, and served as tools for political, socialisation, education and social control she argued. For instance Operation Feed the Nation (O.F.N) in 1979 came up to emphasize the importance of agriculture. To emphasize the need for citizens to be law abiding, War Against Indiscipline (W.A.I.) emerged. The role of music in Literacy Campaigns cannot be overemphasized. Ebenezer Obey (1972) in one of his recoded works reminded the audience of the change to right hand driving. On nationalism Sunny Ade recorded '*Nigeria Yi ti gbogbo wa ni*'. Sunny Okosun recorded works for the international community on the evils of the apartheid system in South Africa 'Fire in Soweto' thus emphasizing black cultural nationalism and condemning all forms of racial discrimination. Fela Anikulapo Kuti also recorded works bordering on social issue and vices, political events and human rights abuses. In 'ITT', for instance he satirically exhorted all the elites, rich, and government officials not to steal.

These works also serve as a repository of extant ( a wide range of these exists in archives abroad, while some are located in Radio Nigeria Gramophone archives) Nigerian music, especially traditional music which is fast loosing its appeal (for example the various drum ensemble repertoire, asiko songs and other folkloric songs because of modernity and acculturation). Such works are manifestly used to portray some aspects of Nigerian history and culture. They are aired in every nook and cranny of Nigeria, both in the rural and urban areas satisfying certain psychological needs of some individuals. This encourages artists and musicians to record the type of music.

Psychologists explained that emotional tensions and stress are always present in humans which if not released, ultimately result in withdrawn, moody, aggressive and irritable behaviours. This ultimately leads to depression, nervous breakdown and insanity in extreme cases and predisposes humans to harmful actions; affect personality and disrupt cordial social relationships. Musical activities such as music recording session or music production session, and live performances/shows/concerts, help participants and audience to release bottled up emotions and tensions thus, meeting/satisfying their psychological needs. One way in which recorded works provide tension relief mechanism among Nigerians, is in its response to social and political issues (Omibiyi, 1985), the implicit criticism directed at those who are at the helms of affairs in recorded songs. In so doing the artists/musicians and their audience (the public) get some of their accumulated grievances off their chest. A typical

theme, which facilitates the relief of tension, is the ridicule of the elites, the politicians, military governments, corrupt officials and police and their corrupt practices for instance in Fela Anikulapo Kuti's "ITT" and Daura and his group in 'Bawan, Allah, Yakubu Gowon (Omibiyi, 1985). Similar recorded works with themes concerning dishonesty, poverty and economic hardship, love, and injustice, help to relieve tension, promote positive interpersonal relationship, dissuade negative or dysfunctional attitudes and help to develop better attitudes and new ideas among Nigerians. Leaders are advised to observe good governance, while the citizenry are enjoined to be good and law abiding.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident from the foregoing, that the music recording industry has important functions within the society. However, there were some other indirect or over sight functions by which the recording industry contributed to the growth and progress of the Nigerian society. Other means by which the music sub-sector impacted the society are first, the praise and eulogies extolling harmonious, responsible life style and peaceful coexistence among Nigerians by artists and musicians in their songs reinforce permissible societal values. Second, though the recording industry's activity is purely an urban oriented enterprise, it however provides recorded music that is listened to in every nook and cranny of Nigerian cities, towns and villages. Its products in form of media works provide recorded entertainment available to the people through retail outlets. This affords the people, most especially the rural dwellers of watching and or listening to their musical idols that they cannot meet thus, assuring the people, of a place in urban oriented social life style. Implicitly, while providing entertainment for rural people it also serves the purpose of dissuading rural-urban migration since the recorded works are also welcome as a change in the communities, thus complementing other local recreational facilities.

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