

CHAPTER FORTHY-SEVEN

DIGITAL MUSIC RECORDING AND SURVIVAL OF A NIGERIA ARTISTE

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Abstract

Nigerian music artistes have been thriving under Analog music recording over decades until there was a thirst for clean and more purified sound output which brought about the digital music recording system that swept across the entire recording process till date. The digital music system changed the way music is produced and sold. Other influences are the role of a studio engineer and the producer in the production process. The internet digital format and industry standardization are believed to have an influence on the music industry. This article tends to explore the impact of the digital recording on the Nigeria music artistes especially the southeastern part of the country. Findings from this study will bring to bear the problems that the Nigeria artiste are facing as a result of digital influence on the entire music production process and possible solution to them.

Keywords: Music recording, Digital music, Analogue music and Nigerian artiste

Introduction

The Oxford dictionary of computing defined digital as "operating by, responding to, or otherwise concerned with the use of digits or numbers". For over 20 decades, digital music recording has stayed afloat the music industry globally. It influenced greatly the marketing and consumption of musical productions both positively and negatively, especially among the Nigeria artistes.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the MP3 file format and file-sharing networks such as Napster and Kazaa emerged as transformation forces together the digitalization and illegal downloading of music catalyzed a "structural shock" within the industry that fundamentally altered its spatial dynamics and business models (Hrlacs 2012). The effect of this digitization on music brought about a lot of changes like a drastic drop in the CD sales in Lagos, Onitsha and Aba in Abia State which are majorly the main market for music sales. Platforms like spotify.com, CD bay.com and other internet sites took over music sharing and sales.

However, there is no gainsaying that digital has fared better than analogue technology but disadvantages the Nigeria artiste especially as it continues to allow music to be acquired free of charge or at a very low price on the internet. Digital music compression technologies like MP3 (Mpeg audio layer3), O99 (Ogg Vorbis), advanced audio coding (.aac), Itunes, (.m4a mp4), windows media Audio(.wma) and free audio lossless codec (.flac) have all aided distributing music and reproducing without authorization. It is worthy to note that these digital formats can compress or shrinks the audio file size of CD-quality to a very small portion of MB for example, MP3 can shrink the size of a 600MB CD to 30MB with this powerful ability 100 CDs of different artistes CDs, 700MB capacity each can be compressed into one CDR of 700 MB.

Comparison of Analog and Digital Recording System

This research work compares and explores the relationship between analogue and digital recording in several ways. A review of the meaning of both analogue and digital, firstly, analogue refers to the transformation of an acoustic signal in a medium such as air, to a voltage travelling in a copper wire. The voltage signal is an analogue representation of the acoustic signal to an analogue signal which is a microphone. In digital recording, numbers represent a digital waveform. An audio signal is represented in digital memory with a binary code that stores a huge amount of numbers that are used to represent a signal. An Analogue-digital converter (ADC) is a computer chip that is used to convert an analogue signal into digital information. This process is called sampling and has dramatically changed the world of sound. (wikipedia.org) There have been arguments of whether an analogue recording is superior to digital or vice versa, but it is highly dependent on the quality of the systems under review and other functions which are not related to sound quality.

In comparing the qualities in both systems of recording, firstly, there is an absence of error mechanisms in the analogue which are present in the digital audio systems, they are aliasing, quantization noise and absolute limitation of dynamic range. In digital, there is excellent linearity in the audible band and low levels of noise and distortion. It is worthy to note that accurate, high-quality sound reproduction is possible with both analogue and digital. A well equipped analogue system may outperform digital and vice versa, though it is less expensive to achieve a standard recording in digital systems except if the standard is too poor. Secondly, analogue technology has one of its disadvantages in the sensitivity of analogue media to minor physical degradation is more pronounced, analogue systems perform better and still produces recognizable sound, while digital systems will usually fail, unable to playback anything from the medium. Thirdly, digital system or recording have a uniform source fidelity, inexpensive media duplication, and direct use of the digital 'signal' in today's popular portable storage and play devices while analogue requires comparatively bulky high-quality playback equipment to capture the signal from the media as accurately as digital. Fourthly, In duplication, digital copies can be duplicated indefinitely without degradation or loss of quality but analogue losses quality when duplicated often. Again, a striking advantage of digital recording process over analogue is the more convenient recall of settings and plugins. The plugin can be stored in the computer hard disk or arrange in a digital audio workstation (DAW) and recalled conveniently for usage during mixes, but this can be very cumbersome in analogue process since these parameters or plug-ins are recalled or assembled manually during mixes.

The Effects of Digital Technology on the Music Industry

Digital technology has both positive and negative impact on the growth of the music industry. Before the advent of this technology, many songwriters and singers would never have had the opportunity of coming to limelight if not for the internet. This is possible because of the formats that were created to ease the sharing of music files on the internet.

In the mid-90s, audio CDs competed with and ultimately surpassed the popularity of cassette

tapes for market share in retail recordings. Music on digital in format could be digitally extracted into a waveform format using a computer and software available to the average consumer. Nonetheless, the sheer size of the resultant native audio file precluded ease of distribution and exchange. (Hinduja, 2006). These formats undoubtedly gave rise to the indiscriminate sharing of music files essentially over the internet. Furthermore, digital technology decolonized recording studio hence the birth of project studios. In the 1980s, record sales increased as consumers reacquired their LP collection on compact discs (CD) the new digital sound reproduction format introduced on the market by Sony and Philips in 1982.

Although CDs at first had a positive impact on sales, digital technology resulted in major upheavals in the recording industry. There were quick changes in studio practices and the decolonization of traditional recording studios (Dunaway, 2000). According to BBC reporter, Mark Savage, 'sales of CDs plummeted by 23% in 2019 as consumers flocked to streaming services for their music. He also wants ahead to say that the CDs that sell in large quantities tended to appeal to older, non-traditional music buyers with six of the year's top 10 albums either film soundtracks or now compilation. (bbc.com).

The Southeastern Music Industry and Challenges

CD sales undoubtedly dropped drastically in Nigeria especially in the Southeastern part of the country after the internet boom. There were record labels like Rodgers all-star, Sammy Sparkle Music, Melody Records in the early 80s were majority known for artiste management music production and sales that are no longer booming as before. Labels like Rodgers all-stars that had hits like "sweet mother" in one of Nico Mbarga's albums had sold over 2 million CDs and still selling but has dropped drastically since the internet take over. (interview 2019) Also, an interview with one of the famous gospel artistes in the 80s, Mr Chika Okpala reveals that artiste management and music business in the record label that produced him was effectively more than what is obtainable recently. There were departments in the recording companies, production session, artiste welfare, marketing session and legal session in charge of artiste royalties.

Challenges:

- Big record labels, companies, studios like Joelas, Rodgers, Melody and others became unstable with some folded up while others retrenched their staff.
- There was an unimaginable drop in CD sales making some of the major distributors to diversify, thereby causing the exit of some talented artists from the industry.
- The major challenge of the music industry is unarguably piracy.

Those who remained in the industry found it very difficult to move the industry forward got frustrated by piracy.

Once you make it difficult for the record labels which are the major unit of the music industry to survive... (The result would be what is obtained now) it is the record label that aggregates all the other factors together. They give the artistes a platform, the producers, they hire the

songwriters, publishing people they contract and deal with, they do the PR, they do the packaging, they do the marketing, they do the promotion. They are the ones who hire photographers to do a photo shoot for the album, they are the ones who hire the video directors, scriptwriters, dancers and what have you. If you make it difficult for the record label to survive, what you have is utter chaos (Adedji, 2016).

Copyright Problems and Unauthorized Marketing Rights

It has become a norm in the music industry in Nigeria especially in the Southeast of Nigeria where people exploit another people's work indiscriminately, bootlegging of physical copies of musical properties, the unauthorized copying or distributing music materials is piracy. Piracy has been described as the insidious animal activity that threatens musicians' livelihood, musical creativity and production (Stobart, 2010:29).

Tony Okoroji traces the roots of piracy in the Nigeria music industry which by he termed 'cancer' to the 1980s with the introduction of cassette technology. the cassette tape was quietly taking over the major carrier of music (but) the music industry in Nigeria was slow to notice development.

There was virtually no established facility for the production of legitimate music cassettes, yet there was a huge demand for them. While the industry ultimately reacted, the pirates had moved in long before...and pirated version of every successful release on vinyl appeared in the market sometimes even before the official release of a record. (Okorji 2009:23). Commercially recorded music has been available online since the mid-1990s when the MP3 format made file-sharing feasible over the Internet. MP3 files can be easily copied and transferred from one user to another. However, illegal downloading and sharing of such files have led to copyright infringement and intellectual property lawsuits. Among the most publicized was that of *A&M Records v. Napster* (2000-2001), which resulted in the Internet company Napster being fined and forced to shut down in its original form. Napster provided software and a website that allowed users to post MP3 files of music that other users could download. The company was sued for facilitating Napster users in the illegal copying and distribution of copyrighted property, referred to as "music piracy."

Major court cases up through the Supreme Court have addressed the issue of "fair use" and copyright infringement, and the U.S. Congress has passed laws such as the Audio Home Recording Act (AHRA) of 1992 and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998 that place restrictions on the copying and distribution of intellectual property in digital formats—including recorded music. Current copyright law allows a consumer to make a copy of a commercial CD for personal use, including encoding as MP3 files for use in their MP3 player, but it is not legal for the person who the purchased a CD to give or sell a copy of a copyrighted song or any other CD content to another person.

The legal controversies over file-sharing on the Internet have made record labels hesitant to sell music as data files—whether MP3 or another format—over the Internet. In 2003 Apple

Inc. established the online iTunes Store to allow owners of its iPod players to download music files legally. However, over 70 percent of commercial music recordings are distributed globally by four major companies: Universal, Sony BMG, Warner, and EMI. These companies would only allow Apple to license the rights to distribute their music legally over the Internet if Apple would guarantee to protect their music from being illegally copied.

Apple's solution was to envelop each song purchased from the iTunes store with a secret software element so it cannot be played on unauthorized devices. This is a “digital rights management” system (DRM). Apple has an agreement that should the DRM system (that Apple calls “FairPlay”) be compromised so people can make unauthorized copies; Apple will have to fix the problem within a few weeks. Users who purchase songs from the iTunes Store can play their DRM-protected music on up to five computers and an unlimited number of iPods. CDs do not contain this DRM, and they can be freely encoded into AAC or MP3 formats in a series of steps, and then transferred to an iPod.

Other companies have set up online stores to sell protected music files for their MP3 players, computers, and other devices. However, the files have different digital rights management (DRM) systems that make them incompatible with devices manufactured by other brands. The software designed to protect the music from theft restricts how the files can be transferred from one device (or person) to the next. As a result, the music purchased on Microsoft's Zune store will only play on Zune players, music purchased from Apple's iTunes store will only play on iPods, and music purchased from Sony's Connect store will only play on their players.

CDs do not have DRM codes. Songs on CDs can be posted on the Internet and downloaded freely. This has led to a widespread exchange of music files between individuals, but most significantly from Internet sites that allow users to download music illegally. This practice was very widespread during the late 1990s and early 2000s and still exists. The illegal sharing of music from CDs has apparently contributed to the current poor economic health of the recording industry, along with other problems.

In Onitsha, Emeka offer plaza to be précised, people rent shops and stores only to be pirating music properties. Once an album is released in the market, they buy the CD at the rate of ₦200 or ₦150 naira as the case may be then rip it to mp3 format and start sharing to the public at the rate of ₦20 per track. Indiscriminate sharing of music files have become so deviating to the extent that even music artistes leverage on that as a means of promotion, whereby an artiste will even pay these mp3 pirates to share their song freely. That is how bad it has become (interview, 2018). This frustration was expressed by Chika Okpala a gospel artiste in the Southeast of Nigeria was asserted.

When a marketer tells you his much he is willing to buy your album and you don't have a choice but to sell it to him because if you decided to handle the album your way, pirates will deal with you and you may end up not getting a dime from your

work. They would tell you how to handle music and the royalty that they will be paying you” (Personal communication).

Recommendation

The music industries if aptly managed can help in boosting the economy of the country. Nigeria remains the largest music market in Africa and can surely help create unimaginable employment and eradicate poverty. Although the government has started doing a great deal in the fight against piracy through the government-approved institutions like (COSON) Copyright Society of Nigeria, under the directorship of Chief Tony Okoroji who in recent times had staged drives against pirates in Alaba, Onitsha and Aba. One of the strongest drives was the call by COSON to shut down Alaba Market explaining the fact that: COSON ... do not have anything against the people doing their legitimate businesses at Alaba international, but the good people have been tarnished by the criminals in their midst and the market association continues to protect them. while young Nigerian musicians and actors are working day and night to produce great works, these criminals are busy reaping where they did not sow. This wicked act must be stopped to encourage the creativity of our youths who are doing the nation proud (Okoroji 2012)

I will recommend the following as actions still needed to complement the efforts the government (COSON is already making)

- The intervention of the financial institutions in Nigeria can help boost the industry.
- Stringent measures must be put in place by the government in the enforcement of copyright laws.
- There should be proper awareness and public education about piracy 90 percent of Nigerians do not understand what piracy is, and its negative effect because from the findings of this research it is observed that people do approach these pirates, pay them to copy the music of different artists in one play-along device.
- The government should checkmate the activities of the music market unions and create a proper database of them. this will help curtail illegalities in the musician industry.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly the digital music system has come to stay. The ability to manage its negative effects is something that will take a gradual process. It has brought about so many solutions like the internet, making upcoming composers and singers whose music release can reach every part of the world in seconds, and also so many unknown musicians became popular. It is important that we embrace this trend, leverage on it and changes the face of the music industry or Nigeria especially the structure eastern part of Nigeria.

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