

Reading Nigerian Hip Hop Music through Nollywood Films: An Examination of The Wedding Party

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Abstract: The symbiotic relationship between motion picture and music cannot be over-emphasised as both stands as an important aspect of the expressive art form. Movies represents and mirrors the society while music communicates emotions, complements the storyline and expresses the characters' inner feelings. This study explores the interrelationship between popular music and Nollywood by investigating the occurrence and implication of hip hop music in the movie the *Wedding Party*. Through in-depth content analysis of the data (movie) a larger occurrence of hip hop music was isolated and classified which indicated the popularity of the genre and its acceptance amongst all age grades. The research also validates the argument that hip hop music and its associated culture is becoming the toast and major feature of the mainstream wedding ceremonies in Nigeria today

Keywords: Motion picture, Nollywood, Movie Soundtracks, Hip hop Music, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying the fact that music and films are a very important aspect of living in the modern age. Both being very essential within the expressive art form with an unprecedented influence in today's popular culture making it almost un-imaginable to fathom life without both. Music has always been part of humanity which dates from time immemorial, having various description with the most definitive as being an organised sound which is pleasing to the ears. This supports the fact that every sound cannot be categorised as music while an un-pleasant sound will be cacophony or mere noise. As observed by Ogunrinade (2016) 'music serves many purposes such as orientation, appeal, entertainment, and education and because of its high level of penetrative power, music seems to play a vital role in human socialization' which invariably makes it a vital tool in film making, stage plays and theatre production. This article focuses on the interrelationship between music (hip hop) and motion picture in the Nigerian Nollywood movie industry isolating the occurrence, function and implication of hip hop music in the film *Wedding Party*. The research is based on qualitative analytical method and the data that informs this paper was derived through content analysis (textual and audio-visual) of the movie the *Wedding Party*.

1.1 About Music and the Hip hop Genre

Music can be categorised or classified based on its form, style or message while Traditional/folk music and popular music are among the major broad categories. The Nigerian popular music scene parades various styles like Highlife, Juju, Reggae, Afrobeat Fuji, and Hip hop music. Hip hop is

presently Nigeria's mainstream music and its incursion into the country has been linked to globalisation having originated in the Bronx, New York. The popularity and acceptance of hip hop are partly due to the arrival of digital technology and the resilience of the artistes who made the genre dynamic by appropriating existing popular styles like highlife, juju and fuji with infusion of various Nigerian languages making it understandable as well as being a platform for expressing Nigeria's national identity. This evolution was pioneered by the first generation hip hop artistes like The Remedies (trio of Tony Tetuilla, Eedris Abdulkareem and Eddie Montana), Baba Dee, Lord of Ajasa, Sound Sultan, Ruggedman and 9ice among others, which—become the norm in the present time giving the Nigerian variant of Hip hop a global presence and recognition (Adedeji 2022).

1.2. About Motion Picture and Nollywood

The motion pictures can be described technically as a series of pictures projected in rapid succession with support of light giving the optical illusion of motion. The artistic representation of a story through motion pictures is called movies and movies evolve from the drama which is a sociological phenomenon that mirrors the society where stories (storyline) are expected to sync with the three unities of time, place and action as propounded by Aristotle in the Poetics. Dramatic enactments are naturally performed for a live audience on stage while the advent of audio-visual technology birthed the movie industry where the dramatic scripts in form of the screenplay is now interpreted by actors and recorded for the screen with technology for viewing on the big screen (cinema), digital streaming, or home viewing on digital disk video format.

The Nigerian film industry referred to presently as Nollywood evolved from the popular theatre era called the *Alarinjo*-travelling theatre which are itinerary dramatic groups that travel from town to town to enact stage productions (Barber et al., 1997; Clark, 1980; Jeyifo, 1984). They are quite popular with the majority domiciled in the Yoruba speaking parts of Nigeria now referred to as South West Nigeria. The travelling theatre groups transited to television productions with the advent of the first television station in Ibadan in 1959 where groups like Hubert Ogunde Troupe, Oyin Adejobi group and Moses Olaiya (Alawada) group among others became regular features on television. From the television era came the big screen film production period as pioneered by productions like Ade Afolayan's *Ajani Ogun* (1976), Hubert Ogunde's

Aiye (1980), *Jayesinmi* (1981), Moses Olaiya's *Orun Mooru* (1982) among others.

This period of filmmaking often referred to as the celluloid years entails big budgets with expatriates handling the major aspects of production and post-production. For various reason which bothers the economy, television was cutting down on drama productions while the production of celluloid films are also becoming un-affordable. Theatre practitioners needed another cheaper avenue to get their creative works out hence the home video era with the earlier release of Isola Ogunsola's *Aje Ni Iya Mi* (1989), being consolidated by Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) followed by steady growth and adoption of the sobriquet Nollywood that translated to the present status. (Adedeji (2014), Haynes and Okome (1998). The Nigerian film industry has risen and developed this far due to its prolific output, gaining spectacular popularity with its ability to reach remote and non-elite audiences making it the most dynamic in the history of African media (McCall 2007)

II. WEDDING PARTY-THE MOVIE

The *Wedding Party* is a romantic comedy film centred around two prominent families in Lagos as their ward takes a bold step towards marital commitment which featured Dozie Onwuka-of Igbo extract as he takes his heartthrob Danni Coker –a Yoruba to the alter having sworn to the oath of chastity during their courtship and now looks forward to their first night as husband and wife. The movie celebrates affluence and exemplifies the typical high class “Nigerian Wedding” culture. The story idea is courtesy of Mo Abudu, written and directed by Kemi Adetiba, and produced by Elfike Film Collectives- a conglomerate of four major production houses in Nigeria. It premiered at Toronto International Film Festival, Canada in September 2016 and in November of same year in Lagos, Nigeria.

The movie narrates the story of Danni Coker (Adesua Etomi) a 24 years old art gallery owner and only daughter of her parents about to marry the love of her life, IT entrepreneur Dozie (Banky Wellington). The couple took a vow of chastity and is looking forward to a ground-breaking first night together as a married couple. The date has been set and the bride's parents, who have recently enjoyed a surge in their fortunes, are going all out to make this the wedding of the century. Danni's about to be mother-in-law, Obianuju is having second thoughts about allowing her son to marry into the family she considers beneath them.



Figure 1-The Wedding Party (usa.newonnetflix.info)

The film is a potpourri of exciting moments with a wedding planner on a mission to succeed at all costs, the village guests' unruly behaviour at the wedding reception, the groom's ex-girlfriends looking to make their mark, and the down-low matching making between the bridal train. The film starred many popular actors including: Alibaba Akpobome, Beverly Naya, Zainab Balogun, Emmanuel Edunjobi, Adesua Etomi, Daniella Down, Ireti Doyle, Somkele Idhalama, Kunle Idowu, Ayodeji Richard Makun, Richard Mofe-Damijo, Enyinna Nwigwe, Bose Ogunboye, Ikechukwu Onunaku, Sola Sobowale and Banky Wellington (and a host of others).

III. MUSIC AND MOTION PICTURE

Music is an important means of communicating emotions in films. This may be in form of sounds specifically composed for the film (Soundtrack) or songs specially and consciously selected to enhance the storyline. These will be used to connect or unify different scenes in a film as well as to express the inner feelings of each character in a film. The music in films is used in cueing or harmonise scenes together in the sequence which helps in maximizing the time allotted for a feature film.

Music has proven to be an indispensable tool in the art of film production with the earliest purpose of stimulating the audience with the storyline and action from a dire need of something which would drown the noise made by the projector (London, 1936). Adekogbe (2013) corroborates this assertion when he stated that film music is composed purposely to compliment actions or serve as ordinary background music in movie production. Generally accepted films are only good as to how well they are packaged in line with the audiences' taste. Today's viewer assumes better sound and picture than yesterday's viewer and successful filmmaker knows that it takes a lot of stamina to make it to post-production.

John Belton (2009) describes sound in film as an invisible world that is audible, which consists of different categories of

sound- dialogue, sound effects, and music- and which is regularly broken down into and experienced as separate elements. Makhu (2010) opines that a soundtrack can be divided into three components: speech sound, music and sound effect. Technically, the three components complement one another and constitute the film soundtrack (which helps) to achieve the desired communication between the actors and audience. Speech dialogue is the lines or words said by the character in a film.

Music is a specially arranged sound in an ordered proportion to achieve a particular ideal, and this sound must be well composed either for the film (soundtrack) or specially and consciously selected to enhance the storyline. Sound effect on the other hand represents the artificially engineered sound that is recorded as part of ongoing activities to stimulate a realistic portrayal of that event. Scott Lipscomb et.al (2005) also corroborates that film music is one component of sonic fabric that includes the musical score, ambient sound, dialogue, sound effects, and silence.

Apart from the components of the soundtrack, music plays various roles in filmmaking. To Arnell and Day (1975), as quoted by Makhu (2011), music for film development is broken into two functional parts: realistic and functional. The realistic involvement of music in the film is any form of performance (song, orchestral, dance, or musical opera) by the actor or special band within film production. However, the functional component is any form of music, be it song or instrumental, which is constructively infused into the action to increase the viewer's empathy. Makhu argued that, of the two components mentioned above, the functional component of music is the least utilised by Nollywood, and that the dance and orchestra under the realistic component are occasionally employed due to the nature of cultural involvement in their activities.

Functional music helps the audience to enjoy the action and appreciate the undertones and overtone, which include the specific intentions of the director, but most Nollywood films lack these attributes. There is a need for Nigerian films producer to note that the most remembered film is the one that has a well-coordinated balance between the acting, sound effect, and music.

The *Wedding Party* featured a great number of musical pieces both as instrumentals and songs which cuts across many genres like classical, Gospel, Highlife, R&B with the majority being Hip hop. These songs and musical pieces serve various roles within the realm of functional and technical elements. A typical example is 'Bullion Van' a Hip hop/rap song by M.I used to cue the bridesmaid, best man, and groom into the wedding reception which also represented affluence and the life of riches ascribed to the groom.

IV. THE WEDDING PARTY-WHAT MANNER OF MUSIC?

The *Wedding Party* soundtracks featured twenty-nine tracks of music, which vary from vocal to instrumental and western

classical to African popular contemporary music. The music used in the film was fun and full of energy and well synced so that the audience will not lose concentration or get bored when watching. The following is the breakdown of all the soundtracks used in the movie:

- i. **The Chase** - written and composed by Michael Truth Ogunlade
- ii. **Piano Sonata no, in G major** - written and composed by Wolfgang Amadeus
- iii. **Mozartfur Eluse** - written and composed by Ludwig Van Beethoven
- iv. **Here Comes the bride** (organ) - Traditional score produced by Dr Bayo Adepetun
- v. **Wedding March** – written and composed by Felix Mendelssohn, performed by Dr Bayo Adepetun
- vi. **Turn by Turn** - written and composed by Sunny Jay, Score produced by Bayo Adepetun
- vii. **Acoustic Heart String**, 'Lets Get Our Wife' Serendity
- viii. **Lets get married** - (Bright. Bright Sunshine)" Seduction (Life process)"
- ix. **Solace** - written and composed by Dr Bayo Adepetun
- x. **Utai** - score produced by Dr Bayo Adepetun, written and composed by Ini Edo
- xi. **Bullion Van** - performed by MI, courtesy of Chocolate City Music
- xii. **Oko Mi** - performed by Waje, courtesy of Waje Musik Entertainment
- xiii. **Ja Fun Mi** - (Instrumental) performed by King Sunny Ade courtesy of KSA Prints and packages
- xiv. **Finally** - performed by Masterkraft featuring Flavour and Sarkodie courtesy of 2 Nite Entertainment
- xv. **Let Them Say** - performed king Sunny Ade courtesy of KSA Prints and packages
- xvi. **Ololufe** - performed by Flavour featuring Chidinma courtesy of 2 Nite Entertainment
- xvii. **Goodman** - performed by Ruby Gyang courtesy of Lopy Music
- xviii. **Made for you** - performed by Banky W courtesy of Empire Mates Entertainment
- xix. **Ginger** - performed by LAX ft Wizkid courtesy of Starboy Entertainment
- xx. **Ada Ada** – performed by Flavor courtesy of 2 Nite Entertainment
- xxi. **Eyin Temi Bawo Ni** – performed by Yinka Ayefele courtesy of Yinka Ayefele Inc.
- xxii. **All I want is you** – performed by Banky W courtesy of Empire Mates Entertainment
- xxiii. **Wash** – performed by Tekno Miles courtesy of Made Men Music Group
- xxiv. **Your Matter** – performed by Wizkid courtesy of Starboy Entertainment
- xxv. **Ijo Ayo** – performed by Skales featuring Olamide courtesy of Baseline records.
- xxvi. **I No dey Shame** – performed by Djinee courtesy of Chocolate City Music

- xxvii. **All for you** – performed by Banky W courtesy of Empire Mates Entertainment
- xxviii. **Fine Fine Love** – performed by J. Martins courtesy of Don Family Records Limited.
- xxix. **Laye** – performed by Kiss Daniel courtesy of G-Worldwide Entertainment

V. READING HIP HOP MUSIC IN THE WEDDING PARTY

The *Wedding Party* movie has a vibrant youth driven narrative which bothers on love, relationship, partying (or Lagos life), and weddings among other discernible sub-themes. The typical Lagos wedding ceremony especially of the affluent is expected to be a show off with heavy investment on clothes, foods/drink, choice venue, decoration and music among other paraphernalia. Here the wedding planner always have a field day as the Nigerian wedding industry is now worth millions in naira as a fastest growing sector with major contributions to the economy.

Against this backdrop, a wedding party which is the climax of any wedding ceremony is heavily dependent on an appropriate music, and talking musically the *Wedding Party* movie can be awarded a pass mark based on the synergy between the selected music and the theme of the film whereby visual interpretation of most scenes were accompanied with appropriate soundtracks and carefully selected matching songs. Hip hop music assumed a cogent role in this film with a total number of sixteen featured song out of the twenty-nine songs/soundtrack featured in the movie. The overriding occurrence of hip hop tracks gives credence to the present status of the genre as the mainstream music and a major aspect of Nigeria's popular cultural expression that has no age limitation. The featured tracks have been carefully arranged for proper understanding in terms of artiste, style and the thematic output of the song that warranted their selection.

Table 1- List of Hip Hop Music in The Wedding Party

S/N	SONG	ARTISTE	STYLE	THEME
1	Made for you	Banky W	Hip hop with R&B influence	Declaration of love
2	All I want is you	Banky W ft Chidinma	Hip hop with R&B influence	Affirmation of love
3	All for you	Banky W ft Maleek Berry	Hip hop with R&B influence	Affirmation of love
4	Bullion Van	MI Abaga ft Runtown , Phyno & Stormex	Hip hop/ Rap	Power show and display of opulence
5	Finally	Mastercraft ft Flavour & Sarkodie	Hip hop/Rap with Highlife influence	Rave and female sexuality
6	Ginger	LAX ft Wizkid	Hip hop	Dance and celebration of beauty
7	Wash	Teknomiles	Hip hop	Promise of love and celebration of beauty
8	Your Matter	Wizkid	Hip hop	Promise of love and celebration of beauty
9	Fine Fine Love	J-Martins	Hip hop with Highlife influence	Celebration of love
10	Ijo Ayo	Skales ft Olamide	Hip hop /Rap	Thanksgiving and celebration
11	I no dey shame	Djinee	Hip hop with Rock influence	Promise of love and loyalty
12	Laye	Kiss Daniel	Hip hop	Declaration of love
13	Ada Ada	Flavour	Hip hop and highlife	Celebration of love, beauty and womanhood
14	Ololufe	Flavour ft Chidinma	Hip hop / R&B	Promise and declaration of love
15	Goodman	Ruby Gyang	R&B blended with Hip hop	An ode to all the men celebrating their love and care to women
16	Oko Mi (My husband)	Waje	R&B/hip hop influence	Dedication to future husband and marital union

From the above table, it is quite deducible that the Hip hop music selected presents a seamless blend with the major theme of the movie which is love and relationship (against all odds), with other sub-themes as discussed earlier. In this vein the above sixteen songs can aptly fit into these themes: Love and its affirmation, celebration of beauty and womanhood as

well as affluence /celebration of life which were all projected in the film.

The use of Hip hop music also presented some new possibilities through which the genre can be read or analysed. First and foremost, it can be argued without mincing words that the *Wedding Party* actually give credence to the popularity and acceptability of the hip hop genre across all

age grade which also established that the genre is currently the mainstream music in Nigeria and has successfully permeated the fabrics of the country's popular culture.

Further to this as film reflects the society, so also the enactment of the storyline in the film can be a precursor of the sociological influences of the real life we live in. This is so as in the present day Nigeria the incursion of the Hip hop culture into the Nigerian wedding scene is major where the genre always take the centre stage for party goers while the couple comes in to their reception with special hip hop numbers. This symbiosis has also been complemented by hip hop artistes with many releasing special numbers specifically targeted for wedding ceremonies. Here songs like 'Today Today' (2012) by EL-Dee and 'Perfect Gentleman' (2014) by Sean Tizzle readily comes to mind.

Reading Hip hop music in wedding Party one can also deduce a considerable form of appropriation by the artistes. It is a statement of fact that the genre hip hop originated from the African-American culture and presently what is being presented by the Nigerian players is a hybrid and more dynamic form which is a mixture of rap with existing music style like highlife, juju, or fuji to present an Afrocentric form of hip hop that represents the Nigerian identity. This discernible in tracks like M.I.'s 'Bullion Van' which is a blend of rap with highlife and 'Finally' by Mastercraft featuring, Flavour and Sarkodie (from Ghana). It should be noted that hybrid culture in Hip hop is a form of creative negotiation against cultural imperialism whereby the artiste can be global and still retain their own national identity (Adedeji, 2011)

Lastly and closely related to the concept of hybridization is the use of language in the Hip hop songs where it is observed that the performance style of these artiste is highly dependent on the use of code-switching. This is also referred to as language mix where the artist uses a mixture of one or two languages in a line of communication. In this instance we can isolate the use of Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo and Twi (in 'Finally' where the Ghanaian artiste Sakordie was featured). This concept started at the formative years Nigeria's of hip hop history when players were experimenting with different modes to ensure acceptability for their art where the Yoruba language played a dominant role being the official language of Lagos which is the music hub of Nigeria, here also taking along the Igbo language as Lagos has a very large population of Ibo dwellers.

This trend of multilingualism as corroborated by Omoniyi (2009:124) is 'widespread and growing as a result of global cultural flows, [while] it seems that in some environments hip hop artists deploy linguistic convergence in performing in the dominant official language of the cosmopolis' Presently code-switching has become one of the highlights of Nigeria's hip-hop featuring a mix of various Nigerian dialects like Hausa, Idoma, Kalabari and Fulfulde with standard English and Nigerian pidgin to produce a blend of unique hip hop music

that is doing a lot to promote the country's cultural identity on the global stage.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) and the popular music scene being promoted through the popularity of Hip hop without reservation in recent times has been promoting the country's image as well as make ample contribution to the nation's economy through earning both domestic and international. Primarily this research has attempted to establish the symbiotic relationship between music and motion picture and in this instance the use and occurrence of Hip hop music genre in Nollywood's *Wedding Party*. From the analysis it was deduced that there is a great affinity for hip hop music in the movie which is indicative of the acceptance of the genre without age barrier. The study also asserts the popularity and acceptance of the hip hop music as a major feature in the Nigerian wedding ceremonies and concludes that Nollywood movies can now be an important paradigm in which hip hop music can be read or analysed.

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