Technological Influence and Music Production Practices in Recording Studios in Nigeria

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Abstract

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge for industrial purposes. All sphere of life including music making are technological driven. Music production is scientific due to the rigorousness and thoroughness involved for qualitative music. The application of different technological devices makes the recording and production of music effective, efficient and convenient. In the same vein, digital technology has simplified the production process and as well enhanced the producers' performance by providing the necessaries for tracking, arranging, storing, mixing, editing and mastering for quality music. Thus, quality record influences the choice of many musicians/artistes to a recording studio. The objective of this paper is to discussed the rationale for patronage of recording studios which includes; standard/registered studio, quality, accessibility, management structure, technicality in the production process and commercialization. This will enable us determine the extent to which technology had influence music production practice in Nigeria. Relevant literary materials were sought to support the various points. The paper found that technology such as the digital technology has magnanimously influence music making in many recording studio and as well lifted the music industry in Nigeria. It recommends amongst others that recording studio with technological apparatus should influence the choice of music artiste for their production process.

Keywords: Technology, Influence, Music Production, Recording, Studio

Introduction

Music production practice is witnessing in recent times vibration of advances among recording studios in Nigeria. Music as a creative art has attained professionalism due to the utilization of several state-of- the-art technology, equipment and gadgets as can be found in most recording studios. This influence has resulted in the quality of recorded music cherished by consumers and has increased the sales of records produced. The value of advanced music production practices involving technology such as digital apparatus has led to efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery from many studios in Nigeria. Advanced music production practices guarantee the product of the music industry.

Technology has enhanced music production. This is because technology according to Longman (1995) involves the application of knowledge based on scientific theory for industrial purposes. All spheres of life including the mass media, music production and other aspects of all human endeavour are technologically driven. Application of technologies to organizing and operating the print and electronic media for public consumption such as the mass media makes information accessible, useable, affordable and retrievable. In the same vein, the application of technology to music production enhances producers' performance, provides storage facility such as media player (Mp2, Mp3, etc.), Digital Video Disk (DVD) and also guarantees quality music production through equalization, reverberation, echo and delay which incorporates mixing and editing of sound during studio operations.

Emergence of Recording Studios in Nigeria

Prior to the establishment of recording studios in Nigeria, recordings were done outside the shores of the country, particularly in London between I 911 and 1922. Notable Nigerian musicians whose records were produced in London include the Rev. J. J. Ransome Kuti and Shotayo Adeyemi respectively. Also, a number of Nigerians who were resident in London

recorded songs using Zonophone during this earliest stages of music recording in studios. Music recording in Nigeria was traced to the vast communication technologies that promote global interactions where ideas were readily received to improve on every aspects of society. The origin of music studio in the Sub-Sahara region points to the 1920s which according to Grownow (1981) received the first commercial records of music in some obscure studios by social anthropologist until recording studios began springing up in Lagos through recording activities of the ethnomusicologist (Loko, 2005).

The earliest studios established in Nigeria as shown in the study by Nwanne (2008) were those of 1957 by Philip records studios, Lagos; 1960 by Polygram, Lagos; 1963 by Premier records. Lagos; 1970, Electrical Musical Industry (EMI); U & I Studio, Benin-city; 1994, Music Matter studio, Okwokoko, Delta State; 1996, Kay-Jay Studio, Effurun, Delta State; 1998, Sam Soft Studio, Sapele, Delta State; 2000, Y2K Studio, Benin-city among others. The establishment of these studios was influenced by the multinational companies which promoted Nigerian artiste during the period. It was not until 1960 that indigenous recording companies were introduced into the recording industry to pave way for indigenous musicians who patronized the studios for the purpose of 1iv performance and commercial recordings.

Rationale for Patronage of Recording Studios

The decision of the choice of recording studios by musicians for the purpose of producing a recorded music involves a number of rationales which includes: standard/registered studio, quality, accessibility, management structure, technicality in the production process and commercialization.

Standard/Registered Studios as a Rationale for Patronage

The choice of a studio patronized by musicians has the nomenclature of state-of-the-art equipment, skilled manpower and result oriented studio. In

addition, most musicians would prefer to patronize a registered studio. This is because registered studios are recognized by the government and they operate under a legislation that empowers them to provide services to the general public under a strict regulation of the law. Similarly, they are under the umbrella of association such as Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) which the government recognize as a body for musicians. Hence, musicians could have confidence in patronizing such studios for the purpose of either live performance or on recording sessions.

Quality as Rationale for Patronage

Quality of production by producers of recorded music influences the choice of musicians to a recording studio. Stark (2009:1) observes that musicians will often patronize studios they discovered that has producer who bring a unique perspective to inspire, assist and provoke artiste to be at their best via the quality sound of recorded music they produce. It is the quality of the finished product of the recording session that always endears musicians to continually produce their music in such studios. Quality of music can be measured when the music produced is subjected to criteria of assessment. A piece of recorded music is said to be qualitative when it conforms to required standard of production. It is expected to exhibit quality beats, rhythm, tonalities, mixing that ensure quality assurance when assessed by those who are musically inclined that will be able to pass a fair judgment of accepted music produced.

It is against this backdrop that professionals in the field of musicology watch out for stranger/weaker beats in a quality music, they listen to rhythm to detect the regular repetition of the sound whether it is sustained; the observe the upward and downward movement of the musical sound to find out if they are consistent for the period the music lasts. Most experts in music production evaluates the balancing of sounds by means of mixing and editing, to justify sound quality in terms of equalization, reverberation, delay and echo. Through these measures, producers ensure that products

consistently conform with the quality standard appropriate for their intended audience.

Accessibility as a Rationale

Studios in obscure location are likely to have reduced patronage of musicians. Eyiyere (2007: 153) note that, the sitting of a studio should comply with localization of small and medium enterprises (SMES) of which accessibility, proximity to source of power, proximity to source of capital are among considerations Accessibility is considered by most musicians in their choice of choosing a studio where their music would be recorded. This is because, a studio that is easily reached will spare the musicians the difficulty involved in sourcing for a studio far away from their reach.

Management Structure as a Rationale

A good management structure is likely to attract the patronage of musicians to a given studio. Efficient and effective management structure in a recording studio influences the choice and option of most musicians. This is because, a music studio operation has a management structure consisting of the director, manager, studio engineer, assistant engineer, producer, assistant producer, session musicians, the artiste, the arranger/conductor, pro-tools editor and many others. It is the presence of this element that often shape the choice of an artiste to patronize a studio. This structure is capable of efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery thereby motivating patronage.

Technicality in the Production Process

The role of technology in recording formed a strong consideration in the opinion of an artiste in choosing the type of studio where he will produce his music. Since technology has a strong influence on the recording studio, artiste will usually evaluate the availability of technological equipment that will meet sound taste of his audience. Binajdar (2011: 1) suggests that, before an artiste will select a recording studio he will usually certify the

recording facilities that will project his ambition. Recording facilities are essential elements in production of quality music. Therefore, a studio with producers that have detailed knowledge and understanding of the use of technology will have an edge over all others in terms of patronage.

Commercialization as a Rationale for Studio Patronage

Majority of producers in studios promote artiste records by marketing their recorded music. Record producers are involved in commercialization of their end products. Commercialization provides opportunity for collaboration under a contractual agreement between producers and artiste.

According to Muharram (2012:2), the tie between producer and artiste is the commercialization opportunity that exists in music production practices in recording studios. Commercialization benefit artiste in the sense that it is the means by which they earn a living and thus would of necessity enter an agreement in the sales of their music. Furthermore, Kargbo (2006) is of the view that commercialization of recorded music is the function of record label who employ the best hands in the ring of distribution, marketing and retailing of recorded music. Record labels through their outlets promote sales, enhance the economic stature and the capacity of musicians in a competitive market. Musicians rely upon this record labels because of the chain of professionals whose expertise are indispensable.

Also, musicians are motivated to work with record labels in the production and sales of their recorded music because they know the bottom line of their career is commerce. The record labels are able to package these musicians like any brand in the market place, enhance their profile and chances of being noticed by scouts or agents. Hence, they often patronize music record studio who they discover are knowledgeable about the workings of the industry.

The Role of Modern Technology in Production Practice

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge. Music making is also scientific, involving rigour and thoroughness. Its process has been made easy by the application of many technological devices. Some of these enable producers to track sounds by organizing, arranging, storing, retrieving, packaging, mixing, editing and many others. The arrival of the digital technology has simplified the production practices of recorded music in Nigeria. The digital music recording technological devices emerged in the history of production practices in the early 1980s.

Roland-Mieszkowoski (1989:12) states that digital is the means of using a system in which information is represented in the form of changing electrical signal. He views digital technological recording process as the reason for a high quality recording of sound and music. He came to this conclusion when he studied the result of the experiment on the application of digital systems to quality audio in Japan in the 1960s. Since then, scholars like Mascenik (1989:17) supports the idea noting that digital recording leads to quality of sound recording, Peterson and Robair (1999:2) on their part are of the view that digital recording is made possible through the computer. Through the use of the computer, conversion of sound from analogue to digital signal is made possible. The indication from the above is that, the digital technology makes the recording and production of music easier, possible, convenient and efficient. It has given the music industry a boost by heightening the rate at which musicians and the record labels increase both production and commercialization of recorded music. Irrespective of the advantages of technology to music production practices in recording studio, it is not without some noticeable challenges. One of such challenges as reported by Goldman (2010) is that most recording artiste in recent time have by-passed the traditional roles of studio thereby affecting the sales of recorded music. This is due to the fact that digital technology has introduced to the industry home studio recording practices without the assistance of record producers and audio engineers. The rise of

independent recording by many artistes raised a question of quality assurance of recorded music since the traditional process is invaded.

Conclusion

The chapter concludes that technology such as the digital technology has greatly influenced the making of music in many studios in Nigeria. The influence is shown in the patronage of studios by musicians and increase in sales in the work of artiste because of the technological packaging of the various artistes via recording labels using the state-of- the-art equipment in the production of recorded music.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion reached, the following recommendations were drawn: musicians should patronize recording studios with the technical. This will enable quality production of sound and music. Also, the choice of a record label by an artiste is important. This is because the packaging of an artiste will promote and increase his profile and the sales of his recorded music. Therefore, recording studios with technical equipment that has the knowledge of the workings of the industry should influence the choice of music artiste for their production purposes.

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