

Original Research Article

Music, Style and Message: A Classification of Major Themes in Nigerian Hip Hop

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Abstract: Hip hop which originated from the African-American community of the Bronx New York is exerting a domineering effect in most African countries. It is un-arguably and gradually becoming the most popular mode of musical expression among artistes in the sub-sahara region with visible affiliation to the global popular culture trends. The Nigerian youths have embraced this music style and identified with its culture thereby bringing the genre to the mainstream of the country's popular music scene. Through lyrical and textual analysis of select songs and artistes, this paper examines the Nigerian hip hop brand against the backdrop of its major identifiable themes and attempts a classification module for the genre via its output and messages.

Keywords: Popular Music, Music and Message, Hip hop and Rap, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Music as a means of communication also functions as an avenue for education and instruction within the entertainment paradigm, while hip hop as an expressive art form and cultural movement re-echoes this stance due to the socio-economic situation that resulted in its origin. According to Chuck D of the Public Enemy rap group 'hip hop is first and foremost a communication tool [and] for the last twenty years, hip hop has communicated to young people all across the world, people in different time zones who speak different languages' (quoted in Ards 2004: 318).

Every piece of music has a subject matter, a central idea or ideas that the artist tries to pass across to the listener. This 'theme' is transmitted via different formats whether recorded or performed. In hip hop where rapping is employed primarily, the theme is mostly transmitted via narratives created in a constructive and sequential manner describing or unfolding an event. The hip hop terrain on the global scale is a torrential playground of thematic outputs ranging from subject matters like marginalization, identity, love and relationships, police brutality, and poor economic conditions to projection of violence, affluence, sexual conquest and misogyny among others.

Hip Hop: from Activism to Commercialism?

The Bronx in New York has been recorded as the origin of Hip hop music (Keyes 2004), while the genre came forth as a reactionary music aimed at resisting marginalization of African American within the mainstream American Socio-political and economic system. The initial narratives and rap themes highlighted the existing systemic racism against blacks and the resultant impoverishment of the African American communities due to non-inclusion. This made hip hop stand out then as an outlet for self-expression among African American youths towards economic and socio-political emancipation.

However, in recent times the socio-political consciousness of hip hop seemed to have been on the decline while its activists role has been watered down with a near opposite pattern of narratives which celebrates mundanities and visualises eroticism and misogyny among other illicit vices. This has generated a lot of criticism and debates as to why the present rap culture have chosen the path of commercialism and jettison social commentary and perhaps this is not

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farfetched as rappers always easily bow to the pressure of the elites that owns the music industry to “sell out” for a guaranteed commercial success .This is aptly captured thus:

Rap artists are ... influenced by pressures from elites in the music industry. To maximize sales, record industry moguls encourage provocative, edgy lyrics. Producers not only encourage artists to become “hardcore” but also reject or marginalize artists who go against the grain. As a result of such practices, a directly proportional relationship has developed between rap music’s explicitness and the sale of its records (Weitzer & Kubrin 2009:5).

Similar trend has been noticed in the Nigerian hip hop scene where there has been constant criticism that the genre has backslidened from its conscious and social commentary stance which characterised the early output of the music into the recent trend where majority of what is produced seems not to have expected messages but riddled with overtly sexual innuendos and promotion of affluence and get rich quick syndrome. Most industry enthusiasts believe that hip hop having ascended to the mainstream music status in Nigeria should strive to make more music that can contribute positively to the Nigerian society in terms of message which in turn will make it stand the test of time

The Nigerian Hip Hop Music and its Thematic Classification

Nigeria’s initiation into the hip hop culture began in the 1980s when the Sugarhill Gang’s ‘Rapper’s Delight’ prompted the emergence of local groups and MCs. The first rap album to be released in Nigeria was credited to Ronnie (Ron Ekundayo) titled *The way I feel* in 1981 while the real mainstream success of the genre began with ‘Sakomo’(1998), a pioneer hip hop hit song. This was followed by a series of transformations that ensured the genre’s survival despite the ailing music industry of the late 1990s.

At this contemporary time the Nigerian hip hop has evolved, while a unique groove and distinct sound has been cultivated and the country has finally arrived at its own variant of hip hop called ‘afro hip hop’ which is blend of existing popular music styles like juju, fuji as well as afrobeat with contemporary rap. It has a distinct feature of multilingualism characterised by ‘code-switching’ or ‘code-mixing’, where the music is performed with a mixture of Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin and one or more indigenous languages.

Major themes found in Nigeria’s Afro- hip hop can classified into nine discernable categories as follows:

- 1) Dance and Party raps
- 2) Love and relationships
- 3) Bragging Rights or Ego Tripping
- 4) Glamour and materialism
- 5) Girls and Sexuality
- 6) Struggle and Ghetto life
- 7) Gangsterism and Street life
- 8) Nationalism and Afrocentrism
- 9) Politics and Social Consciousness

Some song extracts that reflected these themes are discussed below and the artists were selected based on their popularity within the Nigerian music scene and the depth of the songs. It should also be noted that most of the songs followed the code-switching pattern while attempts have been made to provide translations when necessary for proper understanding.

Dance or Party Raps

These are hip hop songs whose thematic outline simply calls the listener to the dance floor and are meant to elicit pleasure and celebrate live. In Nigeria most artists strive to have a party track or club banger which they believe contributes to making an artist popular and relevant while it also brings financial gratification. When a song is a ‘party jam’ as it is often called, it brings the artist more shows and appearances which are major sources of revenue for performing artists in Nigeria. According to one of the pioneers of Nigerian Hip hop Ruggedman, he advised upcoming artistes in his ‘Hip-hop 101’ introductory track to *Ruggedy Baba* Album (2007) that releasing a dance track single in *naija* is sacrosanct among other things they need to do to work their way to the top.



Figure 1: Ruggedman Debut Album Cover-2005 (epoh.ng)

This is not farfetched as Nigerians love to dance and as being expressed in recent terms also love to ‘catch cruise’. This advice was actually from experience as Ruggedman also consolidated his career with a dance track ‘Baraje’ released in 2004 following his 2002 ‘Ehen’ diss track and other singles that followed the path of confrontation. One can actually assert that “‘Baraje’ featuring C-Mion ... was more than just a party track. The song would prove to be critical in Ruggedman’s career” (Ayomide 2015). The dance track was a huge success becoming the game changer which contributed immensely to the commercial success of his debut album *Thy Album Come* released in 2005. In ‘Baraje’ Ruggedman simply capitalised on an imagined erotic pleasure of the buttocks and wriggling waist of a female fan while simply inviting others to dig in and get their groove on in the dance floor:

*Move your body,
 Make you shake that thing wey you get
 Dance and Baraje,
 Omoge bend your waist over... (etc.)
 Move your body
 Shake that your asset (buttocks)
 Simply dance, let loose and bend your waist over ... (etc)*

Following the same pattern, in 2006 Weird MC –Nigeria’s foremost female rapper released ‘Ijo ya’ which simply means –it’s time to dance where the rapper simply beckoned her fans to the dance floor with a heavy dance rhythm and creative use of Yoruba *gangan* talking drum on an hip hop beat.

*Ijó yá, Ijó yá
 Àwa mà ni Ijó yá
 Ijó yá, Ijó yá
 Àwa mà ni Ijó yá
 Désolá lóní flow, lyrics lóri gáangan
 Sola lóri gáangan ,Òrò lóri gáangan*

Translation:

It’s time to dance, we are the ones
 It’s time to dance we are the ones
 Desola owns the flow with lyrics on the talking drum
 Sola on the talking drum
 Giving you punchlines on the talking drum... (etc).

Love and Relationships

Love and relationships are among the most exploited themes in popular music and the Nigerian hip hop scene presents an array of songs reflecting this theme. One of the natural phenomenon of living is cravings for love, to be loved and also the potential to love others. No man is an island love fosters relationships while relationships also have it attendant complications among which are entanglements and heartbreaks. As music is an integral part of living so also is the expectation that music, by extension hip hop mirrors this aspect of living in their outputs.

Delving into the theme of love and relationship is Wizkid’s ‘On Top Your Matter’ a 2014 release which practically set the music scene ablaze with the song becoming almost an anthem among hip hop fans. Against the backdrop of a highlife influenced hip hop beat produced by Del B, Wizkid displayed his vocal dexterity professing an

undying love for his damsel, thanking her mother for passing onto her a scintillating body which he is ready to die for. Here is an excerpt:

I fit die on top your matter eh (baby oh)
Baby girl God bless your mother eh (baby oh)
You too fine pass mami water eh
Baby bless your mother
Baby girl God bless your father eh (baby oh)
I fit die on top your matter eh (baby oh)
Baby girl God bless your mother eh (baby oh)
You too fine pass mami water eh
Baby bless your mother
Baby girl God bless your father eh (baby oh)
Love me make I love you baby oh (baby oh)
Kiss me make I kiss you baby oh (my baby oh)

Baby girl you mesmerize me
I've been searching searching (x3) and I finally found love (yeah)
Baby girl you take my heart away
I've been looking looking (x3) and I finally found love
I wanna have kids with you baby
Dem go school for Germany
I find peace with you baby and I'll never leave you my lady
I wanna please you my baby
Buy you everything you need
Dem go bring your car from Germany
Give you mansion and money (etc)

It should be noted that in recent time a sub-set of love induced songs now called wedding songs are gradually emerging on the music scene and hip hop artistes are also trying to cash in commercially on this by ensuring they have tracks in this direction that can enjoy airplay and endless rotation by DJs at wedding receptions as wedding ceremony is a big deal in the Nigerian social circuit. Typical examples are 'Today Today' (2012) by EL-Dee and 'Perfect Gentleman' (2014) by Sean Tizzle among others.

Bragging Rights and Ego Tripping

Ego tripping or the art of self-praise is a common phenomenon in hip hop culture where battling among MCs is a permanent feature availing rappers the opportunity to engage in lyrical contests. This theme has constantly appeared on hip hop recordings where artists boost their reputation and maintain their street credibility and self-worth by throwing punches at rivals while massaging their ego along. In verse three of 'Elbow Room' (2006) rapper Mode 9 engaged in a lyrical ego tripping:

I don't knock about or barge in ,so call me major interference
I come to make MC's mum like one of my parents
My appearance at a show got ma foes darting
Cos they make me laugh hard like 30mins of Martin
I'm making more headlines than corn rolls and partings
While you be puffing shit gas like greedy people farting
Most times when I'm done with it, ya scared of starting
I put my heart in the game blood, plus my soul
Like a surgical transplant, my lyrics and my flow
Get me more hugs than skillful soccer players scoring goals
I'm hungry like Snoop in the deep cover of death row
So I eat rappers like they made of egg rolls
Keeping it real types always have to learn to let go
I keep it real for me not because one young punk said so.... (etc).



Figure 2: Rapper Mode 9 (amazon.com)

Olamide is another hip hop artist that has gradually worked himself to the top after releasing his debut single 'Eni Duro' (2010) followed by his debut album *Rapsodi* (2011). He came hard in 'Eni Duro' where he exhibited a lot of bragging right announcing his entrance into the industry with the determination to take over. He bragged:

Olamide is here, just like the 1st day of the year
I knockout emcees like banger and I throw them in the air
Those wey blow in a blink of an eye dey disappear
(Those that hit it always disappear in a blink of an eye)
The one wey be ebu dey to try to make sound but we no hear
(Those that are fake try to make music but their beats are terrible)
Okay alright odiah e dey there, Is okay if u aint got my back almighty dey there
(It's okay if you don't have my back the God is with me)
Mi o le salo o, ma a ta tan sibe, Maa tun ta kpokpo bi Obesere papa to sibe (etc)
(I'm not going anywhere, I'm here to stay, I will remain agile like Obesere the legendary fuji music act) etc.

Glamour and Materialism

Themes of glamour and materialism, as reflected in hip hop rhymes, lyrics and videos projecting affluence and what has come to be known as a life of 'bling' in this sub-culture, is now a prominent feature in hip hop. This portrayal and narratives about wealth and affluence in recent times has resulted in the creation of a stereotype for how hip hop artists should talk, look or live, a model now being appropriated by most artists globally.

Talking about the life of affluence Olu Maintain presents a typical example in this realm with 'Yahooze' (2007):

Yahooze, Yahooze oh oh.
Ti n ba hammer first thing na Hummer
One million Dollars
Éló ló máa jé tíí n bá se sí Naira
Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday
Boys' dey hustle
Friday Saturday Sunday, Gbogbo ayé
Champagne, Hennessy, Moet For everybody
Ew'awon omoge Dem dey Shake their body
Everybody enuff efizy take am easy
It's all about the Benjamin's baby... (Etc)

Translation:

Yahooze Yahooze,
When I come into sudden wealth
The first thing to buy is a Hummer Jeep
One million dollars, how much will it be when I change it to Naira
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, boys are hustling

Friday, Saturday, Sunday is time to enjoy
Please give everybody Champagne, Hennessey and Moet
See the girls just shaking their body
Everybody try and display affluence
Don't be surprised because it's all about the Benjamin's baby (etc.)

The song has been a reference point in recent times for portrayal of affluence in the Nigerian hip hop scene while the video also did justice to this complimenting the lyrics with the display of state of the art cars, champagne, women and dollar bills. It received much criticism for supporting internet fraud as 'Yahoo Yahoo' is a term used in Nigeria for internet fraudsters while the title of the song was also a derivative of Yahoo and part of the lyrics indicated coming to sudden wealth. The artiste however debunked these assertions.

If there is any other way the theme of glamour and materialism cuts across in hip hop then one should take a critical look at the music videos being churned out in this sector. It will not be an over-statement to assert that majority of hip hop videos thrives on this theme with over visualization of big mansions, donning designers wears, cruising on yachts, popping champagne and of course with the artiste being surrounded with beves of beautiful ladies.

Girls and Sexuality

Closely associated with the life of 'bling' in hip hop are songs centred on girls and sexuality. This theme has been very rampant in hip hop of North American origin often complimented by the life of 'bling'. The Nigerian hip hop scene has also taken a cue from this thematic trend, while some artists go about it in a more subtle and coded manner avoiding stark references to sensitive body parts or sexual organs, others say it as it is with lewd lyrics describing sexual acts and organs. It should be noted that despite censorship or rather 18+ ratings, songs of this nature are gradually becoming a dominant feature of Nigeria's popular sub-culture. The over-popularity of sexuality and eroticism is overtly visible in hip hop music video where it is common to visualise the woman's breast and buttocks complimented with sexually induced dance styles.

In recent time on artiste that captured the area of sexuality and eroticism vividly is Rema in his hit track 'Soundgasm' (2021). This is a sexual explicit song whose title is a combination of sound and orgasm, as expected it was rated 18+. Here Rema exploited his lyrical and vocal dexterity to vividly describe sexual act, narrating his own ingenuity and skills at making love in a dirty way while projecting the response of his partner in the act. Here is an excerpt from 'Soundgasm':

Your body high me like lean, when we do it skin to skin
And as you rush, they increase, I feel the drip inna your 'V'
Shorty say she feeling sore, she grab my neck and she whisper, "Please"
Shorty give me dirty splash on my chest to knee

Babygirl your body is my medicine
Sweet baby melanin, sweeter than sugarcane
If I hickey hickey on her neck
Sex like a gangster, on my face-innocent
Stroke her pussy with my index, Shawty gotta orgasm
Tapping on that pussy like I'm *tryna* (trying to) kill a motherfucking insect
Oh Ah (etc)

Struggle and Ghetto Life

It has since been established that marginalization and ghetto life realities have been a major impetus towards creating rap, while hip hop's survival, growth and mainstreaming in the United States and Nigeria has a testimony of struggle. Narratives of struggle and survival with the depiction of ghetto life and the limitations it possess to its inhabitants has since been one of the strong points in hip hop around the world, Nigeria inclusive. In his 2007 'Ghetto Dream' release Da Grin graphically presented his struggles when he said:

*Àimoye many times tí mo n play free show
Àimoye ìgbà táwon ee yan ti ní kin lo give up
Wón ní mo local p' óná mi o'nse hip hop
But mo wà determined, mo dè wà focus
T'orìe ni orúko mi se n spread bi Staphylococcus*

Translation:

So many times I've performed for free just to be heard
So many times people have told me to give up on music

They said I'm too local and can't succeed in hip hop
But I have been determined and focussed
That's why my name has now been spreading like staphylococcus (bacteria)

Wizkid whose love induced song was discussed earlier, is another talented and celebrated Nigerian hip hop artiste that has undergone tremendous growth that have translated to international recognition. He won a Grammy award in 2021 through his collaboration with Beyoncé on 'Brown Skin Girl' (2019). He documented his ghetto experience in his acclaimed 'Ojuelegba' song where he recounted his struggle and in road into the Nigerian music industry while he traverses the street of Ojuelegba in Surulere a suburb of Lagos. He narrated his experience at Holdup Studios in his hustling days and advised folks to be patient and wok on their ambition as it would pay off eventually. Here is an excerpt from 'Ojuelegba' by Wizkid:

Ni ojuelegba. They know my story
From holdup studio, I be hustle to work ee
Ni ojuelegba o, Me and CD
From holdup studio, We been hustle to work ee
Ni ojuelegba o, My people dey there
My people suffer, Dem dey pray for blessing eh
Ni ojuelegba o, My people dey there
Dem dey pray for blessing, For better living eh eh
At Ojuelegba, they knew my story
From Holdup studio where I was hustling
Its always me and my CD then, hustling my music
At Ojuelegba my people are there, they are suffering
They are praying for better standard of living

.....
Kilodale, Aye o le to yen o
(What have you caused, see life is not too difficult)
Aye o ni double, Adura lo le se o
(Life has no duplicate, only prayers can take you through)
Call on daddy, Adura a gba o
(Call on God, your prayers will be answered)
Ti isu eni ba dele, A fowo bo je
(When you are made, you live a coded life)
See eh e kira fun mummy mi o. Ojojumo lo n s'adura
(Please hail and salute my mother as she prays everyday)
Mon jaye mi won ni won soro ju. Ojojumo owo n wole wa
(I am now enjoying my life they say I'm loud as money flows in everyday)
E kira fun mummy mi , Ojojumo lo n s'adura...
(Please hail and salute my mother as she prays everyday)
Mon jaye mi won ni won soro ju
(Iam now enjoying my life they say im tooloud)I am feeling good tonight.
This thing got me thanking God for life (etc)



Figure 3: Wizkid in 'Ojuelegba' Music Video (youtube.com)

Gangsterism and Street Life

Gangsta Rap has been a major sub-genre of the American hip hop music and this style often describes street exploits and gang related activities in graphic details. It evolved from hard core rap and rose to become the most

commercially viable style of hip hop in America in the 1990s (Gangsta Rap 2014). This style emerged among rappers in the late 1980's and was popularised by artistes like Ice T, Easy E, N.W.A (Niggas With Attitude) where Dr Dre and Ice Cube emerged and later consolidated by Snoop Dogg who became one of the best known figures of Gangster rap through his affiliation to the Crips Gang of Long Beach, California. Rap and Hip hop culture developed from the street and its evolution is associated with various outdoor (street) activities like Graffiti painting, B-boys and B-girls (Break dancing), MC-ing and Street battles as well as some not too pleasant underground hustles like drug dealing and pimping being controlled by street gangs, therefore the street and hip hop are like a siamese twins that cannot be separated. Rappers are supposed to be tough and 'keep it real' and one way of doing this is through reality rap- where street live experiences are being re-lived in rap narratives and lyrics.

In the Nigerian hip hop scene, Gangsterism and street life experience are also major themes occurring from time to time. This is not unusual as Nigeria's hip hop takes a cue from the global hip hop community where hip hop and the street interlaces and most importantly Lagos the heartbeat of Hip hop share similar situations of degradation, poverty and socio-political neglect that resulted in the evolution of hip hop in New York's the Bronx. In this realm we take a look at Reminisce whose progeny is deeply rooted in the hood having emerged from Bariga a suburb of Lagos feared for its violence and incessant cult activities.



Figure 4: Reminisce- '3rd World Gangster' (instagram.com)

In '3rd World Thug'(2013) Reminisce displayed his street credibility, his tough stance as a real gangster with intention of sending shivers to whoever want to try him out as he is the real deal while his live on twitter is different from the street as he lives in the real world where violence is an everyday occurrence. Here is an excerpt:

We gat a couple guns

But we prefer machetes

Fun awon kan to n form defender Didi Michelis

Ni Naija won fun e ni kan to ba deserve on merit

O digba to ba ka won mo ile pelu ibon you get it

Do your research

Ko wo bi mo se je ni ita Twitter

To ba be ma ko won wa ba e pelu forty seater

Wa do bale wa tun so pe alaga I meant no disrespect

Ma ni ko gba e loju Gbogbo joint e lo ma disconnect

Shoutout si awon keyboard warrior internet gangster

Awon to ni PhD, Ati awon to ni Masters

Gbogbo panda te wo ni ma ko o

Ma pin fun awon boys

To ba tun lo pade mi ni show

You aint gat no choice

Leyin ke ka danu bi Usain Bolt lori track yen

*Egun nla ti wole de
Baata e lo wa nu bag yen
Ema sa hundred meters pelu sokoto te sag yen
Pelu awon te ko dani to ka tike bi fag yen*

*I live in the real world
Shit is real where I'm from
3rd world thugs to wa excuse to ma fi get it on
Ko n se confrontation
I'm just trying to make it known
Eranko l'awon temi fansi e nile zanino*

Translation:

We have a lot of guns
But we prefer to use machetes on those trying to be tough
In Nigeria we give you what you deserve
They won't behave until you deal with them in their homes with guns
Do your research, I'm a different personae outside twitter
If you misbehave I will invade you with my gang in a forty seater bus
You will humble yourself and beg me –your chairman
I will instruct them to slap you and disconnect your joints
Shout out to all keyboard warriors and internet [fraud] gangsters
Those with PhD and Master's degree in the game of fraud.

All your fake adornment will be distributed to street urchins
And if you me me at shows I will terrify you to run like Usain Bolt
The king on the street is here
You have place here, so vamoose with your crew that looks like fags with powder on their face.

I live in the real world
Things are real where I'm from
3rd world thugs looking for excuse to get by
It's not confrontation, just saying it as it is
My crew are the beast it's no fancy talk.

Nationalism and Afrocentrism

In the last decade love for one's country or nationalism has been a subject matter that artists have delved into seriously in Nigeria. Hip hop has been used by youths to express hope for the country despite the hardship and instability. Most artists profess undying love for Nigeria which has been given different acronyms like '9ja' or 'Naija'. Within this fabric of nationalism, the issue of African identity and loyalty to the African continent has also been given greater attention and amplification. Putting himself in the position of the antagonist, Sound Sultan in 'King of My Country' (2009) is a typical example in this category where he professed his love for Nigeria stating why Nigerians should endeavour to stay in the country. He emphasised that no matter the situation, there is no place like home and it's better to be a king in Nigeria than be a second class citizen elsewhere.

*King like me suppose get an excess amount of freedom
Get anything I wan get Cos im a King of My kingdom
See im a king where I come from, how come im a common man in London
I get plenty land back home but now im a tenant in England
9ja na the place where we dey stay Everything is free like light of day
Night and day hustle for pay fight and play na the same we see
Nigeria na home, na home Na home na home for black kings o
I prefer to live like a lion in the jungle than to stay like a dog in the city...*

Translation:

A king like me is supposed to get an excess amount of freedom
And get anything I need because I'm a king of my kingdom
See I'm a king where I come from but now I'm a common man in London
I have plenty land back home but now I'm a tenant in England
Nigeria is the place where we live life in full
And everything is free like light of the day Night and day we work for our money

Fight and play we look at it from same angle Nigeria is the home for black kings
I prefer to live like a lion in the jungle than to stay like a dog in the city... (etc.)

While this theme is reflected lyrically it should also be noted that most hip hop artists have also represented the country visually in their music videos as well as through the use of Nigerian made fabrics and design, while many T-shirts have been designed and used in videos portraying the national colours of green and white with nationalistic inscriptions. A typical example in this realm is Faze's hit track "Originality" where the artiste recounted most of Nigerian super heroes in history bringing their names and deeds to the forefront while also using the theme and colour of the Nigerian flag.

Political and Social Consciousness

Purposefulness and message is an important aspect that cannot be over-emphasised as from the onset '[hip hop] has been an active vehicle for social protest in the US and around the world... Its targets have been racism, discrimination, police brutality, mis-education and other social ills' (Alim 2006: 25). In Nigeria and also elsewhere it is a commonplace for artists to strive for commercial success which most of the time encourages production of music targeted at giving pleasure as a sure path to achieving fame faster. The reason for this is not far-fetched as conscious or politically motivated music often get down-played while artistes churning out dance oriented or pleasure based songs gets media attention, airplay and product endorsement.

Within the hip hop circuit in Nigeria most artistes drop conscious songs once in a while however; Eedris Abdulkareem can be called a microphone activist based on his consistency in that he made consciousness and political commentary a constant and permanent feature in his musical journey. Having emerged from one of Nigeria's pioneer Hip hop group The Remedies, Eedris cut his teeth in Socio-Conscious music in 2003 with 'Mr Lecturer' which exposed the issue of sex for grades in Nigeria's ivory tower.

He consolidated his message driven music with mission in 2004, three years into Nigeria's democratic regime, when he released 'Jaga Jaga' which decried corruption in governance, impoverished citizenry and spate of insecurity in the country. Jaga-Jaga used as an allegory for the country literally means shambles, the song went viral and got him the attention of the then president- Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who reportedly called the artiste names and banned the song on public media (Adedeji 2013:8-9).



Figure 5: Eedris Abdulkareem -during the #EndSars protest in 2020 (wikipedia.com)

In 2020 Eedris released 'Country Hard' when the nation is just coming out of the Covid -19 lockdown and its attendant hardships. In this song where he featured his comrade Sound Sultan, the rapper decried the corruption in high places going on with impunity adding salt upon injuries to the pandemic woes. Sound Sultan provided a powerful and deep chorus which complimented the message. Here is an excerpt:

Country hard oh but we go overcome (hard oh)
Forget your sorrow, we go overcome
Ojoro don dey oh, ojoro don dey but we go overcome
(In equality have set in, but we will overcome)

Republic of suffering and smiling
Number one capital for poverty, got our independence 1960
Most corrupt and bad leadership
No human rights no justice, poverty dey celebrate terrorism
Professor dey work for illiterate, unemployment on the real play
(Professors working for illiterate politicians while unemployment is on the high)
Most oga at the top no get certificate

(Most top ranking officers has no qualification)
Chinese doctors don escape, our health minister no know where them dey
(Chinese doctors have disapper and the health minister is in denial)
God bless our health workers Wey dey represent on the front
(God bless our health workers that are always on the frontline)
Nigerians are suffering and smiling It's time for Nigerians to wakeup (wakeup)
Biafrans say they wan break up (Biafrans are thinking of seceding)

Dollar nah four hundred naira When will dollar equal naira? (next level)
Why we dey borrow from China?J ust to service our budget, lack of proper direction We need economy revolution
If the poor man no go fit sleep I swear the rich no go fit sleep
Leaders wey dey share coconut tree Nah their own head wey them go break
Guy they say you be lazy youth. election time they go use you
Music no dey lie Make we just de jam, as we de try survive (etc)
(Music don't lie, lets just jam it as we try to survive etc)

SUMMARY

Music is an expressive art, and among its many purposes serves two major functions which are firstly to educate –through its message which in turn can influence opinions, instigate actions or document occurrences and secondly to entertain through its aural or visual experience which in turn gives pleasure and satisfaction to the audience. Music elicits emotions and emotions and feelings are part of our everyday life. Hence it is logical to accept that an individual cannot be in the same state of mind all of the time, likewise all hip hop artistes are not expected to be on the same state of mind in their musical expression as variation is part of life. This explains the discovery of varieties in the thematic classification put forward and the outputs of the music discussed.

As it is often said that –there is time for everything, so also do the Nigerian hip hop reflect this home truth. Most definitely there will be a time to agitate or express angst, there will be time to love and hold hands likewise there will be a time to celebrate, dance and pop champagne, therefore following the discussion of this paper the Nigerian hip hop landscape rightly subscribes to this law of nature with its plethora of various themes and messages expressed in their musical outputs.

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