



AFROBEATS

DIGITAL ENCOUNTERS AND THE GLOBAL MAINSTREAMING
OF AFRICAN POPULAR MUSIC

International Conference
12-14 September 2023
UNILAG



ifeas Institut für Ethnologie
und Afrikastudien
CEDIT R A A



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

Organisational team: Matthias Krings (Mainz University), Patrik Oloko (University of Lagos), Ute Röschenthaler (Mainz University), Artemis Saleh (Mainz University), Tom Simmert (Mainz University)

Topic of the conference

'Love Nwantiti', a song by the Nigerian artist CKay, became a global hit in 2021, through the platform TikTok and followed by Top 10 placements in the charts on all continents. It became the most popular African song of all times and exemplifies the growing global influence of African cultural production. There is a growing awareness of Africa as a global exporter of film, music, fashion, and dance styles (Krings and Simmert 2020). Not long ago a global audience still had difficulties to acquire Afrobeats songs by legal means, but now growing numbers of songs are produced that are available on the Billboard Hot 100 and the Viral Charts of Spotify and Apple Music. Digitization has contributed to this development in many ways. Digital technology, streaming platforms, and social media transform production, circulation, and consumption of music. They increase the production of songs, enable their unlimited circulation, and diversify practices of 'musicking' (Small 1998).

The conference intends to discuss these developments related to the global mainstreaming of African popular music, by tackling three closely connected sets of questions: 1. What is the impact of social media and digital platforms on practices of musicking, i.e. how do musicians and fans make use of their affordances, employ text, image and sound when they create their posts? 2. In which way has the Nigerian music scene inspired musicians in other African and non-African countries, for example, in the form of transnational cooperations, and vice versa? 3. Who profits most from the new digital technologies: do they empower African artists, and female artists in particular, in their economic participation and in the overcoming of postcolonial power imbalances? What is the role and gain of global entertainment and technology companies?

Background to the topic

The developments outlined above imply that taken-for-granted 20th-century narratives of cultural transfer and taste-making from the USA to other parts of the globe are increasingly losing ground. These narratives also tend to veil the ongoing mobility of music in both or even multiple directions, especially in the Global South, which draws our attention to the numerous 'counter-hegemonic media flows' (Ewing 2016). In the new millennium, large numbers of new music styles emerged, mostly in amateur studios, in which music is digitally produced. The new opportunities of production brought forward new types of musicians as cultural entrepreneurs (Rösenthaller und Schulz 2016) who replace music businesses that have for long been based upon a highly diversified division of labour. A good example is the platform TikTok which has become one of the most important sites for young people to discover music with it in a multitude of creative ways. On TikTok, remixes, covers, and dance challenges are laying the foundation for songs to become hits, allowing musicians like CKay to be known by a global audience. The affordances of these platforms tend to counteract the intentions of the music industry which aims at globally regulating intellectual property rights and controlling access to music and innovative practices (Kretschmer 2022; Rogers 2013; Rösenthaller und Diawara 2016). Other voices also intend to restrict the flow of musical elements, at least from the Global South to production centres in the North, by calling these flows illegitimate 'cultural appropriation' (Ziff und Rao 1997: 8). Such restrictions would in the end lead – like the intellectual property narrative – to bounded cultural products as an exclusive property, negating that all artistic creation and cultural practices are the product of mutual inspiration for generations.

Regardless of such obstructions, new centres of music production have emerged in various regions of the globe. Nigeria, and particularly its economic and cultural metropole Lagos, is one of these new centres of cultural production. Beginning in the 1990s, with its Nollywood film industry (Jedlowski 2016; Krings and Okome 2013), it is meanwhile also known for its popular music Afrobeats (Simmert 2020; Ugor 2021) and musicians like Burna Boy, Tems, CKay and Wizkid who are touring in Africa, Europe, and North America. Nigeria's cultural production inspires other African regions and beyond and is an expression of its growing soft power (Ogunnubi and Isike 2018). Having become aware of these developments, cultural entrepreneurs and the music industry players such as major labels and streaming services come back to Nigeria, and other African countries, attracted by the promising economic outlooks.

Objectives of the conference

The conference seeks to understand the reasons why it was Nigeria with its Afrobeats music that became a player of global reach-out in the past decade. Through the growing availability of social media and platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, music, texts, and dance appeal to wide audiences. This raises the question of the role which the performative forms of expression that are mediated by social media and platforms play for the virality of music in digital networks. TikTok, for example, encourages the iterations, multiple imitations and variations of music pieces. How does this shape the sensual experience of music and how is this related in turn to increasing their circulation?

In addition to Nigeria, Africa has a multiplicity of other important centres of the production of popular music, among which are Abidjan, Addis Abeba, Bamako, Dakar, Daressalam, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Nairobi, and Yaoundé. The conference therefore is also interested to understand the production of popular music in these centres whose importance is reflected in the worldwide fame of their musicians. In this process some music genres are more successful than others in finding fans beyond the African continent. The conference wants to discuss these inner-African dynamics of music production, their conditions and audiovisual language. In which way have postcolonial power relations been altered by the digitally transformed music production? What role does the nation state play in the organisation of music business? Who are the stakeholders in the music industry in African countries and what are their interests? In which way is cultural production in a country influenced by the global music industry? Which personalities are particularly promoted in the music business, which roles can and do female musicians play? Which music genres and aesthetic preferences have influenced Afrobeats and how have African music genres inspired each other?

Quoted references

Ali, Ray. 2021. 'TikTok music influence'. *Uswitch*, 26 February 2021: <https://www.uswitch.com/mobiles/tiktok-music-influence/>.

Jedlowski, Alessandro. 2016. *Nollywood. L'industria video nigeriana e le sue diramazioni transnazionali*. Neapel: Liguori.

Kretschmer, Martin. 2022. 'Copyright and non-use'. Keynote zum Workshop "Copyright CARE and African Music Archives: Tensions between artists' interests and the repatriation of music". Mainz, 21.-23.9.2022.

Krings, Matthias. 2015. *African Appropriations: Cultural Difference, Mimesis, and Media*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Krings, Matthias und Onookome Okome (Hg.). 2013. *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Krings, Matthias und Tom Simmert. 2020. 'African popular culture enters the global mainstream'. *Current History* 119 (817): 182-187.

Ogunnubi, Olusola und Christopher Isike. 2018. 'Nigeria's soft power sources? Between potential and illusion'. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 31, 49-67.

Rogers, Jim. 2013. *The Death and Life of the Music Industry in the Digital Age*. London: Bloomsbury.

Röschenthaler, Ute und Dorothea Schulz (Hg.), 2016. *Cultural Entrepreneurship in Africa*. New York et al.: Routledge.

Röschenthaler, Ute und Mamadou Diawara (Hg.). 2016. *Copyright Africa: How Media, Markets and Intellectual Property Changed Immaterial Cultural Goods*. Canon Pyon: Sean Kingston.

Small, Christopher. 1998. *Musicking*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Simmert, Tom. 2020. 'Pirates or entrepreneurs? Informal music distributors and the Nigerian recording industry crisis'. *African Identities* 18, 3: 329-345.

Ugor, Paul. 2021. 'The politics of pleasure in Nigerian Afrobeats'. In: Paul Ugor (Hg.). *Youth and Popular Culture in Africa: Media, Music and Politics*. Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press: 132-159.

Ziff, Bruce und Pratima Rao. 1997. 'Introduction to cultural appropriation: a framework for analysis'. In: Bruce Ziff und Pratima Rao (Hg.). *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1-27.

Programme Overview

Day 1 (Tuesday 12 September):

- 3 pm Conference opening by Prof. Dr. Olumuyiwa Adebajo Falaiye, University of Lagos
- 3.30 pm Presentation of the conference programme by the organisational team
- 4.30 pm 1. Keynote: Paul Ugor
Moderation: Tom Simmert
- 6 pm Reception (snacks, drinks)

Day 2 (Wednesday 13 September):

- 9 am Panel 1: African centres of cultural production: music transfer and the role of Nigeria
Presenters: Maureen Amimo, Imani Sanga, Hauke Dorsch, Abkar Abdul-Rashid Jeduah
Moderation: Tom Simmert
- 10.50 am Coffee break
- 11.10 am Panel 2: African centres of cultural production: stylistic mixing and influencing
Presenters: Aghi Bahi, Girum Mezmur, Léon Tsambu, Tom Simmert
Moderation: Patrick Oloko
- 1 pm Lunch
- 3 pm Panel 3: Staging the artistic self: the languages of music and body
Presenters: Wale Adedeji, Paul Onanuga, Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, Solomon Waliaula
Moderation: Matthias Krings
- 4.50 pm Coffee break
- 5.10 pm 2. Keynote: Katrien Pype
Moderation: Matthias Krings
- 6.30 pm Dinner
- 8 pm Performances by Temmie Ovwasa and Yoda
Introduction Tom Simmert

Day 3 (Thursday 14 September):

- 10 am Panel 4: Music as Business: economy and cultural entrepreneurship
Presenters: Abdoulaye Niang, Usaku Wammanda, John Obi, Basile Ndjio
Moderation: Ute Röschenthaler
- 12 am Lunch
- 2 pm Panel 5: Roundtable discussion with performers and music professionals
Participants: Temmie Ovwasa, Folu Storms, Titilope Adesanya, Yoda
Moderation: Artemis Saleh and Tom Simmert
- 6 pm Dinner
- 8 pm Visit to the New Afrika Shrine (with performance)

Detailed Programme

Day 1:

- 3 pm Conference opening by Prof. Dr. Olumuyiwa Adebajo Falaiye, University of Lagos
- 3.30 pm Presentation of the conference programme by the organisational team
- Patrick Oloko (University of Lagos)
 - Matthias Krings (Mainz University)
 - Ute Röschenhaler (Mainz University)
 - Artemis Saleh (Mainz University)
 - Tom Simmert (Mainz University)
- 4.30 pm **First keynote** by Paul Ugor (University of Waterloo, Canada) English Literature
“Entertainment and politics: Theorizing pleasure and empathy in Afrobeats music”
Moderation: Tom Simmert
- 6 pm **Reception** (snacks & drinks)

Day 2:

- 9 am **Panel 1: African centres of cultural production: music transfer and the role of Nigeria**
- This panel explores the circulation of music styles in Africa and globally, mediated by the African diaspora but also independent of it. It discusses Nigeria’s prominent role in comparison with other African centres of cultural production.
- Maureen Amimo (Narok, Kenya), English Literature
“Kenya to Naija vibes: sonic gesturing and identity politics in Sauti Sol’s Afrobeats collaborations”
 - Imani Sanga (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania), Musicology
“Music mobility and the shaping of Tanzanian hip hop and bongo fleva”
 - Hauke Dorsch (Mainz), Anthropology
“From “Yékéyéké” to “Love Nwantiti”: Popular music of the Mande world and its global transfers”
 - Bakar Abdul-Rashid Jeduah (Milano/Mainz), Sociology/Anthropology
“Global Afrobeats fandom and Korean social media dancers”
- Moderation: Tom Simmert
- 10.50 am *Coffee break*

11.10 am

Panel 2: African centres of cultural production: stylistic mixing and influencing

This panel talks about the mobility of aesthetic formats, the embracing, mixing, and remaking of music styles and their global impact, which in turn has raised new artistic interest in the African music styles like Afrobeats.

- Aghi Bahi (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire), communication sciences
"Influence of "Naija" music on new electronic music from Côte d'Ivoire"
- Girum Mezmur (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia), Arts
"Global music influences on Ethiopian popular music"
- Léon Tsambu (Kinshasa, DRC), Sociology
"From orchestra to solo artist: How digitalisation changed Congolese popular music"
- Tom Simmert (Mainz), Anthropology
"From shaku shaku to Afropiano: Musical feedbacks between South Africa and Nigeria"

Moderation: Patrick Oloko

1 pm

Lunch

3 pm

Panel 3: Staging the artistic self: the languages of music and body

This panel addresses the self-portrayal of artists on stage and in social media, including the aesthetic messages that they communicate with their body and their music.

- Wale Adedeji (Elizade University, Ilara Mokin, Nigeria), Performing Arts
"The significance of language and performance in Afrobeats music"
- Joseph Oduro-Frimpong (Ashesi, Ghana), Anthropology
"Covered beef: Visual rhetoric, rivalries, and album covers in contemporary hiplife (music) culture"
- Paul Onanuga (Ekiti University, Nigeria) English and Literary Studies
"Femme fatale? Female self-representations in Nigerian hip hop and co-construction of identities in digital fandom practices"
- Solomon Waliaula (Narok, Kenya), Linguistics
"Digital fandom creativity and the viral distribution of a Luhya vernacular song in Kenya"

Moderation: Matthias Krings

4.50 pm

Coffee break

5.10 pm

Second keynote: Katrien Pype (Leuven), Anthropology
"African popular culture online: aesthetics and publics in the early 21st century"

Moderation: Matthias Krings

6.30 pm

Dinner

8 pm

Performances:

- Temmie Ovwasa (Independent Artist, Nigeria)
- Yoda (Afrodance Choreographer, South Korea)

Introduction: Tom Simmert

Day 3:

10 am

Panel 4: Music as Business: economy and cultural entrepreneurship

The panel addresses the economic and entrepreneurial aspects of popular music in Africa, the interests of the various stakeholders in the music business – musicians, audiences, producers, labels, streaming platforms – and their roles.

- Abdoulaye Niang (St. Louis, Senegal), Anthropology
“Reshaping musical production: digitalization and home studios in Saint-Louis”
- Usaku Wammanda (Pan-Atlantic University Lagos), Film Sciences
“The economy of music video production in Nigeria”
- John Bessong Obi (Lagos, Nigeria), African Studies
“Ownership of popular music in Nigeria”
- Basile Ndjio (Douala, Cameroon), Anthropology
“Afrobeat: popular urban culture music, digital entrepreneurship and the imagined community in Cameroon”

Moderation: Ute Röschenthaler

12 am

Lunch

2 pm

Panel 5: Roundtable discussion with performers and music producers

This roundtable provides space for musicians, performers, and representatives of the Nigerian music business to exchange about their experiences, performances, and their practices of representation in social media.

- Temmie Ovwasa (Independent Artist, Nigeria)
- Folu Storms (On Air Personality / Actor, Nigeria)
- Titilope Adesanya (Director of Operations, Empire Africa, Nigeria)
- Yoda (Afrodance Choreographer, South Korea)

Moderation: Artemis Saleh and Tom Simmert

6 pm

Dinner

8 pm

Visit to the New Afrika Shrine (with performance)

The shrine is the re-incarnation of the birthplace of Afrobeat music, and is one of Lagos' most prominent places of music performance.

Abstracts

Keynote 1

Entertainment and Politics: Theorizing Pleasure and Empathy in Afrobeats Music

Paul Ugor, University of Waterloo, Canada

My talk will focus on the unique ways in which pleasure and empathy operate as aesthetic and ideological tools in Nigerian Afrobeats music. I will be making the case that the absence of direct and obvious political critique in contemporary Nigerian Afrobeats is not a sign of its depoliticization. I argue instead that the deployment of imageries and tropes of pleasure and empathy in Afrobeats—mostly in the form of romance, consumerism, and friendship—operate as powerful aesthetic devices that redefine, reinvent and redeploy affect as creative and critical instruments of popular culture in a disabling environment that works constantly, unwittingly or otherwise, to deny young people access to amenity in a postcolonial world already marked by privation and uncertainties. I argue that excess pleasure in contemporary Nigerian hip-hop functions as both symbolic and active resistance, expressing subversive access to the rare social spaces of luxury that the failed postcolonial state has denied its young citizens. My presentation thus participates in a broader scholarly endeavour that seeks to examine closely how youth cultures react to and reflect contemporary social change.

Keynote 2 (between Panels 3 and 4)

African Popular Culture Online: Aesthetics and Publics in the Early 21st Century

Katrien Pype, University of Leuven, Belgium

How do songs, dance forms, and their adjacent genres (talk shows, gossip, etc.) get new digital lives? What happens when these transfer from one particular performance context, like the concert venue, or the television studio, to another, like the digital screen? How do moral economies shape digital aesthetics? What kind of “new publics” are intended in this shift towards the digital? And how are these intended publics responding to the digitally transformed content? These are some of the questions that will be addressed during my presentation. The material is based on more than a decade of fieldwork in “Digital Kinshasa”, as I call the online space in which digital users dialogue about figures, events, places, and forms pertaining to Kinshasa culture and society, often in Lingala, slang or a mixture of French/Lingala (and its digiversions). Case studies include YouTube clips that identify Congolese rumba musicians and their cultural products as demonic and embedded within Illuminati networks; the appearance of *mbwakela*, a genre of competition and rivalry from Kinshasa’s popular music scene, that has appeared online and has become a form of political resistance in the diaspora; and, finally, the insertion of excerpts of music video clips in social media (e.g. status updates; stories; etc.). The material indicates the new associations that popular culture, when moved online, set forth. In particular, it will show that (a) the relationships between diaspora and home communities are thickened, as it provides new possibilities for expressing identity, and belonging, but also difference; (b) music and other forms of popular culture gain new secondary agency, related to relationships with personal contacts. Here, users play with the publicness of certain digital platforms or spaces, while allowing to speak in a covert way to specific addressees. Both changes, enabled by the digital infrastructures, provide excellent examples of the various kinds of digital labor that undergirds much of contemporary African popular culture; and they are emblematic for the social action possibilities of popular culture, via which Africans can position themselves in a global environment.

Panel 1: African Centres of Cultural Production: Music Transfer and the Role of Nigeria

This panel explores the circulation of music styles in Africa and globally, mediated by the African diaspora but also independent of it. It discusses Nigeria’s prominent role in comparison with other African centres of cultural production.

Kenya to Naija Vibes: Sonic Gesturing and Identity Politics in Sauti Sol's Afrobeats Collaborations

Maureen Amimo, Maasai Mara University, Kenya

The success of Afrobeats in the post 2010 era manifested by its global reach and international awards has cemented the position of Nigeria's and Ghana's dominance in the genre. This prominence has been further concretized by the nature of collaborations within the genre where artists from other regions in and beyond Africa collaborate with Nigerian and Ghanaian artists to enhance their visibility. Moreover, the constant fascination of Global North artists with the music genre, such as Beyonce, Selena Gomez, Chris Brown, and Ed Sheeran to name a few, suggests a high sense of reputability of Afrobeats in the world of music today. These factors have created a sense of Nigerian hegemony in defining Afrobeats today. This paper argues that despite the domination of Afrobeats by Nigeria and Ghana, Sauti Sol, a Kenyan boy band, has managed to stamp a particularly Kenyan identity onto the genre. I argue that Sauti Sol's harnessing and synthesis of sounds and musical forms from East Africa which are then merged onto the West African identity of Afrobeats has led to a reinterpretation of Afrobeats. By exploring specific collaborations that Sauti Sol have had with Nigerian artists, I make the argument that Sauti Sol's sound manages to hold its own in the context of collaboration with West African Afrobeats artists. I explore the unique sounds that Sauti Sol brings to the collaborations by analysing their independent music; then I compare this with three collaborations done by Sauti Sol and Nigerian artists (Yemi Alade, Patoranking, and Burna Boy) to isolate the distinctive sounds that are merged here. All this is done in order to derive the distinctive sonic identity that is Sauti Sol as well as understand their peculiarity in Afrobeats genre.

Music Mobility and the Shaping of Tanzanian Hip Hop and *Bongo Flewa*

Imani Sanga, University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

From their inception, Tanzanian hip hop and *bongo flewa* music have been shaped to varying degrees by the process of music mobility. Musicians who make these musical genres have been borrowing and using musical styles, rhythms, melodies, instruments, and performance styles from different geographical locales, historical moments, and cultural contexts. This mobility has been carried out through various processes including the following: (1) localization of the music through selection and use of local musical materials such as tunes, rhythms, dance, and/or instruments; (2) internationalization of the music through collaborations with artists from other countries such as Nigeria, Uganda, Congo and South Africa in addition to western countries and borrowing some musical features from famous musicians from these countries; and (3) the practice of using "featuring artists", especially those with different styles or orientation (e.g. rapping with singing). This paper examines the influences of musical mobility as well as the mutual influences between the musicians from different locales on Tanzanian hip hop and *bongo flewa music*. By way of analysis of selected songs, music videos and newspaper articles, the paper highlights these influences and the discourses generated by these musical movements and interactions.

From "Yékékéké" to "Love Nwantiti": Popular Music of the Mande World and its Global Transfers

Hauke Dorsch, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

When Cheick Niang, a Senegalese guitar player famous for both his recordings of popular music but also of the traditional repertoire of Mande griots or jeli, re-interpreted CKay's 'Love Nwantiti' in 2021, he both continued and renewed a tradition of Mande musicians who for decades adapted their music to new musical influences. The guitar had been integrated to the ensemble of traditional griot instruments since early modern times. In the mid-20th century griots expanded their repertoire from historical tales and praise songs to include love songs, and in the mid-1980s Mory Kanté's disco version of a traditional griot song became a global hit. This paper will aim at a genealogy of the globalization of West African music and will thus look at both the similarities and differences of the international marketing of Mande music in the framework of world music in the late 20th century and today's unprecedented success of Afrobeats.

Global Afrobeats Fandom and Korean Social Media Dancers

Bakar Abdul-Rashid Jeduah, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

Beyond the traditional channels for music distribution, social media has emerged as a key player in the circulation of Afrobeats. Through the combination of TikTok design features and platform specific practices, Afrobeats songs such as Love Nwantiti have attracted a large audience culminating in global success. The imitative practices present on the platform have largely been the driving force of this development. This has also given rise to imitation by artist management teams, encouraging musicians to emulate templates that would create the potential for TikTok virality. Afrobeats today boasts of quite a global fanbase, with concerts and festivals taking place all over the World. This global fanbase is very much developed around the musicking practices that are present on social media. The most popular of such musicking practices is dance, specifically Afro dance. Afro dance has led to the emergence of dance influencers on social media who, by virtue of their wide reach, have been influential in the global success of Afrobeats songs. Through this global fanbase, there is a transnational and transcultural engagement with Afrobeats online, including translanguaging covers of popular songs, and dance tutorials in multiple languages targeting specific regional audiences. Whereas Africans, both at home and in the diaspora, have been at the forefront of disseminating Afrobeats through content production online, different regional actors have emerged in shaping Afrobeats consumption in different parts of the World. Focusing on TikTok and Instagram, this paper turns the lens on Korean social media content creators who have taken up key roles in the propagation of Afrobeats through dance. Cementing themselves as influential dancers and choreographers of Afro dance in South Korea, they are mediating the circulation of Afrobeats which goes hand in hand with the music.

Panel 2: African Centres of Cultural Production: Stylistic Mixing and Influencing

This panel talks about the mobility of aesthetic formats, the embracing, mixing, and remaking of music styles and their global impact, which in turn has raised new artistic interest in the African music styles like Afrobeats.

Influence of “Naija” Music on New Electronic Music from Côte d’Ivoire

Aghi Bahi, Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire

Music is a place of exchanges, mixtures and circulation of forms and genres. Afrobeats – “Naija” music – has become a global movement. It is a source of inspiration and even legitimate imitation (e.g. the Chilean musical group Newen Afrobeat). However, it should be noted that (very) few French speakers in Africa seem to owe their notoriety to this musical genre. What “influence” can Afrobeats-“Naija” have on modern popular music and on Ivorian music production? Based on long-term research, the presentation seeks to deepen this aspect of the musical circulation in Ivory Coast. It is supported by observations made in Abidjan from (home) recording studios, social media and other networks and interviews with (upcoming) musicians, arrangers, producers, young DJs, and music lovers.

Nigerian and Ivorian modern popular music came into contact with each other in early postcolonial life. The song “*Joromi*” by Victor Uwaifo, for example, was a success relayed by Radio Côte d’Ivoire. The Ivorian musical adventure is indebted to musicians of various origins, including Nigerian musicians, some of whom have sunk into oblivion for lack of research, and resolutely turned towards the recent history and its heritage. The current phenomenal virality of Afrobeats also affects the Ivorian musical community. In terms of impulse and imprint, Naija music has an innovative influence on new Ivorian electronic music, following an inevitably underground, implicit, and hidden process. It appears that the influence of Naija music on Ivorian musical forms is remarkable on genres such as Rap Ivoire, Afro-Décalé, Afro-Trap, Coupé Décalé, Zouglou-Décalé, etc. and even “*variété*”, in terms of source of artistic inspiration and of “ways of doing things”. It is less a question of “cloning” than of borrowings or mixtures, of greater professionalization, and of heightened ambition. Under this “influence” of Naija music, the rise of a more global musical movement is actually taking place: that of new electronic music from sub-Saharan Africa. It remains to be seen whether this augurs well for the rise of digitalization and the “take-off” of an industrialization of Ivorian popular music.

Global Music Influences on Ethiopian Popular Music:

Girum Mezmur Hawaz, College of Performing and Visual Arts, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Addis Ababa has been the capital city of Ethiopia for more than a century and remains the ultimate melting pot of the vast and diverse musical traditions coming from all corners of the country, as well as significant influences from outside cultures. This has not been difficult as the city's located at the very middle of the country and considering its role as an economic and political center of a culturally evolving nation to which citizens of all age kept flocking in for decades. As multiple local singing styles, rhythms, dances, and indigenous instruments that came from all sides of the country into Addis Ababa characterized the urban experience of the Ethiopian traditional music, foreign musical elements also significantly affected the music tradition in the form of adopted instrumentations, arrangements, styles, and trends. This process was instrumental in fostering what we know today as modern Ethiopian music.

This paper provides insights into the outside influences in the early 20th century that shaped the making of modern Ethiopian music. It also examines how Ethiopian modern sounds managed to remain with distinct characteristics as perceived today in the forms of Ethiopian Pop, Ethio-Jazz, and other genres. This includes early influences from the West to recent increasing influences by the Nigerian Afrobeats among others. The paper will also discuss the impact of digitalization of music and social media in the current consumption and distribution patterns of popular Ethiopian music at home and in the diaspora.

From Orchestra to Solo Artist: How Digitalisation Changed Congolese Popular Music

Léon TSAMBU, Dept University of Kinshasa, DRC

In the 1980s, an exodus movement shook Kinshasa's music scene. Many Congolese artists left to West Africa, especially to Abidjan, where they transited before moving on to Paris or Brussels. In these European cities they will embark on a solo career or create casual or semi-permanent Rumba bands. Their experiences abroad do not reflect the reality in DRC where a solo career, with or without a permanent support band, was almost impossible if an artist did not regularly commute between Kinshasa and Paris where they benefited from good working conditions and advanced technology. In the 2000s and in the context of the American Rhythm and Blues, Afrobeats emerged from between the art of Atalaku, Ivorian Coupé-Décalé, Disc Jockeying and Rap. Starting from Nigeria, Afrobeats conquered all of Africa in various forms grouped under the term of 'musique urbaine'. When the 'Combattants' movement in Europe banned the musical productions of Congolese artists, Kinshasa succumbed to the influences of this 'musique urbaine', imitating Nigerian artists and Congolese diasporas (Gims, Keblack, Dadju, Damso, Youssouffa, etc.) that Trace TV on Canal + promoted with great effort. Today, Rumba is either in competition with or in fusion with Rap, Trap, Afro-Pop, Afrobeats due to its multiple variants. This new approach, which is becoming more democratic in Kinshasa thanks to home studios and the digitalization of music, does not in any way encourage the classic orchestra constellation of the making of Rumba. In addition to making home studios easier accessible for artists (professional or amateur), the extensive digitalization of music has reduced the orchestral labor required for recording and performance in the Rumba format.

From Shaku Shaku to Afropiano: Musical Feedbacks between South Africa and Nigeria

Tom Simmert, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

Electronic music from South Africa has been a significant influence on the creative evolution of Nigerian pop music for a considerable time. In 2017 and 2018, for example, elements of the South African genre Gqom became a trend in Nigeria, where it was named Shaku Shaku, based on the dance style associated with it. The most recent and probably most prominent example to date, however, is the genre Amapiano, which since the early 2020s has become a sound trend that Nigerian musicians have embraced, and in some cases with great success. "Afropiano", as some call the fusion, is the basis of the sound of international stars like Asake, yet among Nigeria's top contemporary artists there is hardly anyone who has refrained from using the sound, whether Burna Boy, Tiwa Savage, Wizkid, Rema, Ayra Starr or Davido. In 2022, this led to a controversial online

debate around issues of ownership and appropriation, ironically sparked by Nigerian musicians who claimed to have been the first to bring the trend to life in their country.

Based on these developments, my paper attempts to outline the personal and musical points of connection between Afrobeats and Amapiano (2015 to the present). Using selected case studies, I will show that the years of collaboration between South African and Nigerian key players give us reason to assume a deep intertwining of both genres and the emergence of musical feedbacks, impacting both genres equally and challenging ideas of cultural ownership along national borders.

Panel 3: Staging the Artistic Self: The Languages of Music and Body

This panel addresses the self-portrayal of artists on stage and in social media, including the aesthetic messages that they communicate with their body and their music.

The Significance of Language and Performance in Afrobeats Music

Wale Adedeji, *Elizade University, Nigeria*

The Nigerian music industry is recently receiving a boost through the success of Afrobeats- the current mainstream popular music genre that has garnered international appeal and investment through the output of its many proponents like Olamide, Tiwa Savage, Davido, Burna Boy and most recently Asake to mention a few. Against the backdrop of language use and performance, this presentation examines the genesis and evolution of the Afrobeats genre – an off-shoot of Afro-Hip Hop – and isolates the significant role of language towards facilitating the genres consolidation, popularization and global appeal. Through digital ethnography with content analysis of music, videos and performance(s), findings reveal that language use in Afrobeats greatly relies on code-switching with a combination of major Nigerian indigenous languages. This has greatly contributed to the genre’s sustainability and acceptance while on the other hand, performance style through creation of novel urban dance styles like “Shakitibobo”, “Shoki”, “Zanku-Gbese”, “Kukere” and “Skelewu” among others have also been a major factor towards ensuring the genre’s global appeal and mainstreaming through youthful cult-following while enabling the promotion of African cultural identity alongside.

Femme Fatale? Female Self-Representations in Nigerian Hip Hop and Co-construction of Identities in Digital Fandom Practices

Paul Ayodele Onanuga, *Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria, and Leuphana University, Lüneburg, Germany*

Despite the pervasive denunciation of Hip Hop as being a veritable platform for patriarchy-laden misogynist representations of femininity and womanhood, some female artistes re-appropriate their representations as a way of asserting their agency. In this context, these artistes further manipulate and own the untoward structural and systemic portrayals. In doing this, they take charge of their self-representations and seek to determine the narratives that subsist about them and their personalities. However, the invasive mediation of digitalization into everyday life means that these self-narratives are not solely self-constructed. Indeed, they become co-constructed with fans, since there exists a circular motion of influences and visibilities. Consequently, the focus of this study is an intersection of both lyrical self-representations by purposively selected female artistes and co-construction of identities online through digital fandom practices. I argue that through artiste-fan engagements, social norms around female representations are either perpetuated or contested. These open up a gamut of possibilities and remark the fluidity of expectations that surround being female, especially when the subjects of interest are celebrities. Four female artistes are considered – Tiwa Savage, Teni Makanaki, Yemi Alade and Simi. As the artistes are all Yoruba – an intentional selection criterion by the researcher – this enables situating the discussions within a cultural narrative especially with regard to the societal influences within the discourses.

Covered Beef: Visual Rhetoric, Rivalries, and Album Covers in Contemporary Hiplife (Music) Culture

Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, University of Ashesi, Ghana

This presentation uses the analytical lens of “critical entertainment” deployed in critical media studies to investigate two seemingly interrelated visual popular genres associated with Hiplife, a unique glocal music genre that blends U.S. Hip-Hop musical aesthetics with that of Ghanaian Highlife. The specific materials I examine are, first, cartoons and memes around Hiplife rivalries (or “beef”) between pairs of Hiplife artists: *Manifest* and *Sarkodie*; *Shatta Wale* and *Yaa Pono*; *Strongman* and *Medikal*; and second, three key album covers of the artists *Wanlov* and *Mensa*. The motivation for this work stems from two scholarly concerns: how research into Hiplife has not paid much attention to the phenomenon of beef; and how scholars have not sufficiently engaged with the dynamic relationship between the varying genres of West-African popular music and their associated (popular) visual media. In other words, I focus on informal and formal visual rhetoric related to the selected music. In my analysis of these ostensibly distinct popular visual artifacts associated with Hiplife, I cumulatively demonstrate how the images not only provoke laughter, but more importantly provide rapid, widely disseminated, and locally legible responses to unfolding matters. For example, the visual rhetoric related to Hiplife rivalries communicates the widespread view that winners of beef are not those, for instance, with the ability to merely string (nonsensical) rhyming words together. Instead, they are Rap lyricists who are adept at delivering coherent messages situated within Ghanaian public-speaking expectations. Again, one of *Wanlov* and *Mensa*’s album covers engages with same-sex matters in ways that sharply critique Ghana’s antigay laws.

Digital Fandom Creativity and the Viral Distribution of a Luhya Vernacular Song in Kenya

Solomon Waliula, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany and Maaasai Mara University, Kenya

This paper is based on a Luhya vernacular song by gospel artist Harry Richie called *Vaida* that was released in mid-2022 only as an audio track. It is an experimental production that could be described a “vernacular song” and is between (Luhya) folk music and Afropop; while its lyrics are in Lunyore, one of the Luhya dialects, it is an improvisation that blends the *Isukuti Dance* instrumental beat with Afropop beat to create a unique sound with a catchy upbeat tempo that fits within the aesthetic of Afrobeat. The song caused a buzz on social media because fans used the audio track to perform and share beautifully choreographed dance challenges that went viral. The lyrics also stirred the hornets’ nest in the public morality discourse arguably because of the interpretations on social media that harped on the perceived explicit, sensual and provocative, which was later disabused by the artist in several ‘repair’ interviews on mainstream media. The artist eventually produced an official video to the song that was, in one sense, an attempt to recover his song from the participatory circuit on the digital platform and to reinsert it in its discographic and ethnographic contexts. This paper is particularly interested in the digital profile of this song and examines the influence of social media, mainly TikTok and Facebook in terms of its production, circulation and reception and (re)interpretations through dance choreography. I find this important because it speaks to the influence of the interacting forces of digital technologies, social media, and local popular cultures in the political economy of Afrobeat.

Panel 4: Music as Business: Economy and Cultural Entrepreneurship

The panel addresses the economic and entrepreneurial aspects of popular music in Africa, the interests of the various stakeholders in the music business – musicians, audiences, producers, labels, streaming platforms – and their roles.

Reshaping musical production: digitalization and home studios in Saint-Louis

Abdoulaye Niang, Université de St.Louis, Senegal

This research focuses on the home studios that began to position themselves in Senegal since the 1990s. These studios had been considered above all as typical examples of a “coping system” used mainly by musical genres such as Rap, which were practiced by young people who, predominantly, could not afford, to a certain extent, expensive recording sessions in a conventional analog studio. But what was seen primarily as fallbacks to music on the fringes of the industry are becoming the common standard in terms of sound engineering practices, attracting both Rap, Reggae and Mbalax artists as well.

The analysis mainly focuses on the case of three home studios based in the city of Saint-Louis in Senegal, the former capital city of former AOF (French West Africa). The creation of home studios in a city like Saint-Louis, underserved in terms of direct access to musical production equipment, organization of shows, etc., is an interesting case for observing the tactics and ingenuities deployed by music actors in order to escape this double layer vulnerability, thanks to digitalized technology and tools. This research shows that the proliferation of home studios, in places as varied as family housing, rooms on university campuses, and, more rarely, dedicated places, is reshaping the map of musical production, but also is facilitating an access to production, by breaking the quasi-monopoly of certain regular studios, which are more expensive and generally more difficult to access. This study also updates the fact that although the managers of the home studios in Saint-Louis work essentially on a small scale, the multiplication of their initiatives, their apparently more humanized characteristics in terms of professional relations as well as their relatively affordable prices, help to make them popular and, in doing so, to sustain a phenomenon of significant scale. Remarkably, at the same time as these home studios seem to be revitalizing musical entrepreneurship in outlying localities far from the center (Dakar, etc.), they are also part of national, sometimes even transnational, exchange networks, a situation that have been considerably facilitated by the development of technologies and digital media widely mobilized in such environments.

The economy of music video production in Nigeria

Usaku Robinson Wammanda, Pan Atlantic University Lagos

Facilitated by evolving digital filmmaking technology, the Nigerian music video sector has been producing high-quality music videos across digital terrestrial television and streaming platforms. These high-quality music videos have contributed to a large extent to the ever-growing global audience of Afrobeats in Nigeria. Through an autoethnography account of my experience producing a “high-quality” Nigerian music video, my research found that these music videos require expensive filming equipment (Arri Alexa mini LF, Cooke anamorphic full-frame lenses, 18x SF lenses, sunmire canon primes, etc.) that are in high demand for music video productions in Lagos. Employing a filmmaker’s approach to visual ethnography and interviews with other Nigerian music video directors, I shed light on the economy of the Nigerian music video sector, addressing the following research questions: (1) Why does the Nigerian music video sector produce so many high-quality music videos? (2) Who funds the production of Nigerian music videos? And (3) How are the expenditures of these high-quality music videos recovered? The media economics theory was adopted to understand why the Nigerian music video sector continuously produces these videos despite their high costs, and how the expenditures are being recovered. My research concludes that the artists and record labels fund the production of these videos that have become a dominant entertainment cultural form that is constantly in high demand.

Ownership of Popular Music in Nigeria

John Obi Bessong, University of Lagos

Little scholarly attention has been paid to how popular music is owned. In Nigeria, for instance, there have been arguments that performing authors should be given exclusive rights over their songs because they labour to create it. But this position cannot withstand the touch of criticism because there is division of labour between record label companies and artistes. To assign creative autonomy to performing authors when other

stakeholders in the music industry contribute significantly to the overall outcome of a song is to go against the ideological basis of copyright. Therefore, it is important to analyze this intricate network in detail in order to understand what copyright means to them. But more specifically, it is important to assess how technology has provided them with new opportunities to market and promote their songs globally. As it will be shown, the ownership of Nigerian popular music is often between record labels and musicians depending on the terms of contract. This clearly negates the western notion of intellectual property rights which privileges individual ownership. But this example also goes to show the vulnerabilities of the international copyright system. Be that as it may, artistes often begin their career independently. However, because they need to increase their fan base and attract the attention of record labels whose sponsorship is pivotal for them to achieve mainstream success, they often resort to posting freestyles, covers and remixes on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, with the hope that it will go viral. In this sense, they come across as cultural entrepreneurs because even though they are unsure of the success or failure of engaging in this practice, they do so all the same. Thus, it will be shown how some musicians employed this technique to gain stardom. Eventually, it will be argued that although digital technology helps in the circulation of music beyond national boundaries, it also enables piracy which has been described as the twin of intellectual property.

Afrobeat: popular urban culture music, digital entrepreneurship and the imagined community in Cameroon

Basile Ndjio, University of Douala

As an inventive fusion of local African sounds and rhythms, such as Highlife, Juju, Fuji, Apala, Ndombolo, and Makossa, with Hip Hop, Caribbean beats, Dancehall, Grime, Soca, and R&B, Afrobeat has gained popularity in many Central and West African countries over the past decade. In a country like Cameroon, where Afrobeat is now widely popular among trendy urban youth, its rise around 2013 has been accompanied by the emergence of digital economic and cultural entrepreneurship as well as social media leadership, in which a number of young successful music and entertainment moguls from the country's English-speaking regions play a pivotal role. This paper examines the crucial role played by Nigerian-influenced Afrobeat not only in the development of social media leadership and digital economic and cultural entrepreneurship in Cameroon, but also in the formation of a trans-regional and national community within the country. It relies on ethnographic research conducted in Douala and Buea, two of Cameroon's major music and entertainment industry capitals. The paper situates Afrobeat from Cameroon at the intersection of globalism and local/nationalism, addressing the tension between transnational or global music and national identity formation. Using the example of Stanley Eno, Cameroon's most internationally renowned Afrobeat artist, the paper argues that a large number of the leading local Afrobeat singers aspire to imitate international Nigerian Afrobeat celebrities, from whom they draw much of their inspiration in the production and management of their music business. The economic and cultural success of these Cameroonian Afrobeat singers hinges on their ability to create a popular urban music that celebrates the country's bicultural and dual linguistic heritage, thus transcending the current political and linguistic divide between Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians.