

Naija Hip Hop: An Analysis of the Music of 2Face Idibia

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Abstract

In recent times, contemporary discourse on the analysis of popular music has taken the front burner. This is as a result of the growing trend of this genre in the stream of world music and the numerous awards being won by Nigerian hip hop artistes both at home and abroad. This paper examines the music of Innocent “2 Face” Idibia to illustrate common aspects between local elements and the western popular features inherent in his music. These features are provided by the analysis of certain musical concepts in staff notation. Drawing on descriptive and stylistic theory, this article provides an analysis of five songs of the musician. Through an interpretive lens, the paper identifies specific elements in relation to his use of melody, rhythm, harmony and form in the music.

Keywords: Stylistic analysis, music genres, Hip Hop, Fusion, popular music.

Introduction

“Naija” hip hop is now an established genre in Nigeria. It is the term used to describe domestically produced, heavily Western-influenced hip hop music in Nigeria. It is significant to note that, every form of contemporary music in Nigeria came to be as a result of influences exerted on them both within and without and have all evolved to become fusions of a sort. This, according to Omójolà (2006) is because modern African popular music is quite often a product of two or more distinct streams of cultural influences. Ekwueme (1986) notes that the influence of the urban exposure on the music of Africa,

which includes the influence of western technology, mass communication media, recorded music of other parts of the world regularly played on gramophone records and tape recorders of various types in Africa, transportation, cinema houses all contributed to the musical evolutions and development in Africa. Contemporary popular music has transcended national boundaries thus giving a trans-cultural meaning to the music in context and performance.

Although the Nigerian popular music has enjoyed scholarly inquisition in terms of textual and sociological features, little attention has been paid to its stylistic features. The analysis of popular music is often confronted with an attitude of bemused suspicion implying that there is something weird about taking ‘fun’ seriously or finding ‘fun’ in ‘serious things’ (Tagg, 1982). The recent studies on analysis of rock music in the west is a pointer to the fact that such music is worthy of analytical investigation, and viewed by others as the next frontier, the ocean floor waiting to be mapped (Kaminsky, 2000).

This paper therefore adopts a stylistic approach to the study of the music of Innocent “2Face” Idibia. The study will trace the life history of 2Face and highlight his musical achievement over the years. Furthermore, it will analyze the style employed by the musician in making his music a unique phenomenon. The theoretical framework is based on the cultural based theory of Meyer who believes that musicians do inculcate culturally based beliefs in the affective power of music (Meyer, 1956). This, According to Good (2000) may come from experiences with family language, religion, and country of origin.

2face Idibia: Early Beginnings and Artistic Developments

Innocent “2 Face” Idibia was born in Oturkpo 1976 to Michael and Rose Idibia, both indigenes of Benue State. His musical career debuted with the Plantation Boiz which comprised three young budding musicians (Austin Ahmedu) Black face and Chibuzor Orji (face). The Plantation Boiz era was significant in the sense that it laid the foundation for the musical career of 2 Face. It was during

this era that he christened himself 2 Face in 1996. In an interview with the Nigerian Entertainment magazine (2002) 2 Face claimed:

The name to me just refers to the outside and inside when you first see me you see the outside but when you get to know me, you see the inside. In my opinion, I believe everyone has two faces

The Plantation Boiz had two albums to their credit. The first album in 1999, “**Body and Soul**” launched the group to limelight, with songs like “**Knock Me Off**” and “**Don’t You Know.**” Their second album “**Sold Out**” was also fair in the market. However, 2Face decided to go solo under Kennis Music and this led to the breakup of the Plantation Boiz group.

His decision to go solo paid off as he ranks between Nigeria’s most successful artist and one of the most inspiring contemporary hip-hop artistes to evolve from Africa. This is evident in the numerous awards within and outside Nigeria. Examples of such awards are the 2005 awards for Musical Excellence in Nigeria, Ghana Music Awards, the MTV Europe Awards 2005 where he was crowned Africa’s Best Act in the newly created category and the 2007 MOBO awards for the Best African act. Other awards include the Channel O Music Video Awards 2005 – (Best Male Video and Best African Video), Hip Hop World Awards 2006 (Special Recognition Award), Channel O Music Video Awards 2006 (Best African Pop), the Nigeria Entertainment Awards 2006 (Special Recognition Award.), Nigeria Breakthrough Artist of the Year, the World Music Awards 2008 (Best Nigerian Act) and the MTV Africa Music Awards 2009 (Best R&B).

His award winning album **African Queen** sold over 5 million copies and was used as the sound track of the 2006 comedy film, Phat Girlz, which made him more recognized internationally. This was followed by **Grass to Grace** in 2006. The latest one titled **Enter the Place** was released in 2008. 2face has also performed endlessly across the length and breadth of Nigeria, Africa and the Caribbean Islands.

Apart from the national recognition in music, 2Face has also recorded an impressive catalogue of international collaborations. In

2004, he recorded **Proud to be African** at a Lagos studio with Whyclef Jean. In 2005, he recorded a remake of his hit, **Nfana Ibaga** with Ghanaian hip-life star Reggaie Rockstone and Dancehall star Beenie Man. There continues to be endless collaboration request from all over the world by artists who are fascinated by 2Face vocal versatility, effortless delivery and pseudo reggae pop style.

Styles Incorporated in the Music of 2face Idibia

Like other popular music genres in Nigeria, the music of 2face Idibia is a confluence of both foreign and local styles. The foreign styles identified in the works of 2 Face are hip hop, Rhythm and Blues, Dance hall and reggae. Stylistic Analysis of any work of art including music should encompass the consideration of all aspects of the work being studied. Five of his songs have been selected for analysis.

Melody

This section provides an overview of the melodic content of the songs. However, 2 Face Idibia uses a range not higher than an octave in most of his compositions regularly using, for example, the male falsetto register for melodic climaxes. Examples of such are found in **See me So**. This song is based on a mixture of Western hip-hop music with traditional African musical elements. The music starts on a 4/4 time setting with a strophic form Western hip-hop and a combination of indigenous call and response form. The call and response is noticed mainly in the chorus of the song. The melodic interval in the music is characterized by a steep rise (not usually exceeding a 5th) followed by a gentle sloping down of the tune: then another sudden rise-then a gentle sloping down. The tendency is for the tune to start high and gradually to work downwards in this saw-like manner. This is in consonance with Ekwueme (1974) who opined that the general falling direction of African tunes, descending intervals are much more frequent than ascending ones especially intervals of seconds and thirds. The larger intervals, while being less frequent, occur most often in ascending rather than descending motion. Examples of these are seen in a section of the music below:

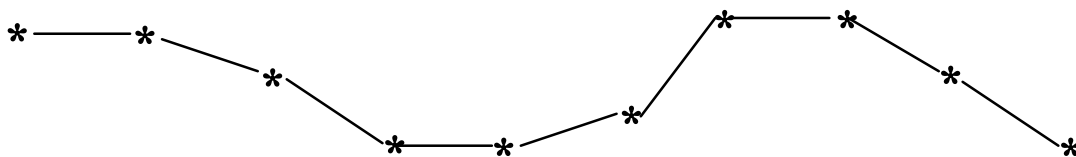


I mind my own bus and I don't give a shit but I still dey feel you o for we are one and the same one struggle

Two basic movements characterize the melodic contour of the songs of 2 Face Idibia. The first is the pendulum like movement swinging rapidly back and forth between high and low notes as shown below in the excerpt taken from “African Queen”:



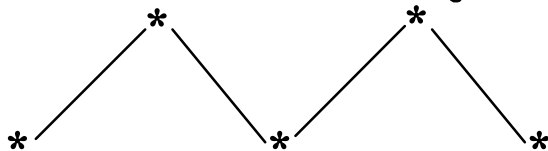
Just like the sun light up the earth, you light up my life The only one I ev-er see with a smile so bright



The second characteristics of melodic movement rises in a step not usually exceeding a 5th and followed by a gentle sloping down of tune, then another sudden rise and a sloping down and so on:



be-ne-fit A - bi to make we dis - a-gree A - bi



From the examples above it is evident that 2 Face Idibia makes extensive use of arch contours for verse melodies. A strong feature of the melodies is the replication of a melodic phrase at higher or lower pitch levels called sequences. The first three notes are called the

antecedent while the repeated phrase (second) is called the consequent as shown in the excerpt below:

Voice

Antecedent Consequent

2 Face songs often contrast longer, repetitive verse melodies with, more complex chorus melodies. The example below is an excerpt taken from **For instance**. In this song, the body and the chorus have 20 measures in all while the chorus takes 9 measures:

Voice

20
li - ving in a trance A - yi oh, my God___ A - la O - yi e this thing that

Voice

22
am fee - ling is a fee - ling of love and you know say is___ so A - la O - yi e! this thing no go

Voice

24
go then u know I go slow_____ A - la O - yi e! See this type

Voice

26
of thing wey we dey feel they make___ me to dey A - la O - yi

Voice

27
e! A - la O - yi e! A - la O - yi e!_____

There is often a leader/chorus relationship in the melodic arrangement of the songs of 2Face Idibia leading to two parts

performing in a call and response format. The various forms of call and response identified in Afrobeat are call and response form with variation, the overlap, strophic, and antiphonal. In the call and the response form with variation, the chorus repeats a fixed refrain in alternation with the lead singer who has more freedom to improvise as seen in the example below:

20
Voice
li - ving in a trance A - yi oh, my God__ A - la O - yi e this thing that

22
Voice
am fee-ling is a fee-ling of love and you know say is__ so A - la O - yi e! this thing no go

In bar 20, the call is made by the solo followed immediately by the response a-la O- yi e from the chorus in bar 21. There is however a variation of the theme by the soloist in bar 23 and 24. The strophic form in 2 Face Idibia’s song is a solo and chorus arrangement in stanzas or verses. Many of his compositions are in this format. An example is **See me so**.

Rhythm

The largest proportion of the songs of 2 Face falls within the range 120-139 beats per minute (bpm). However, the regular use of fast tempo is demonstrated in some of his music (**I dey feel like**). All the songs of 2Face are in beats two and four with the triplets occurring in some of the songs (Like the first five measures of **African Queen**):

Voice
Just like the sun light up the earth, you light up my life The only one I ev-er see with a smile so bright

5
Voice
just yes-ter day_ you came a round my way_ you change my whole scene way

The whole concept of **African Queen** is based on a simple strophic setting. The melody consists of short phrases, which are repeated systematically. The range is narrow, with the ambit of the tune being only a 9th, from F above middle C to G the space above treble staff is covered in the first 6 bars.

Voice

4 with a smile so bright just yes-ter day you came a round my way

The text setting is a combination of both syllabic and melismatic setting as seen in bar 20.

Voice

19 And you're mind me of a thing And that is the Af-fi-can beauty

Repeated syncopated rhythmic motives also feature prominently in all his songs. This is seen in the example below with an extensive use of the dotted quarter note in some of the songs. The songs also incorporate a wide variety of repeated rhythmic motives which results in several complex syncopated patterns as seen in the example below:

Voice

12 do us to turns us to of cir-cums tance them just dey ig-nore our ex is- tence them just dey use

Voice

15 ex- cuse buy chance likethem no know say we dey them dey use us dey play

Many of the vocal melodies by 2 Face Idibia were performed with rhythmic flexibility typical of much Reggae/African popular music.

There is a regular placement of notes on either side of the beat and phrases starting at different points in the bar, helping to create a sense of rhythmic freedom. There is also the melodic inflection captured from the Yoruba and native Idoma language. The song **See Me So** features several characteristics of African music. The song is built on the penatonic scale, typical of the scales used in several folk tunes in Nigeria. There is the use of non sensical syllable (like eh ah and oh) as seen in bars 27 to 35

29

oh oh oh____ eh bro-ther eh eh ah eh bro-ther eh eh ah eh bro-ther eh oh_ eh_

Detailed description: This block shows musical notation for bars 29 to 35. The notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with various rests. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "oh oh oh____ eh bro-ther eh eh ah eh bro-ther eh eh ah eh bro-ther eh oh_ eh_".

The song ends with a small coda based on a Yoruba inflected rhythm as seen in bars 45 to 48

43

Back to Ref. CODA

cos we are one and the same one stru-ggle E-du-ma-re bless us o E-du-ma-re bless me o

47

E-du-ma - re bless me o oh oh____ oh____ oh____

Detailed description: This block shows musical notation for bars 43 to 48. It starts with bar 43, labeled "Back to Ref. CODA". The notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps. The melody features a mix of eighth and quarter notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are: "cos we are one and the same one stru-ggle E-du-ma-re bless us o E-du-ma-re bless me o". Bar 47 is shown below, with lyrics: "E-du-ma - re bless me o oh oh____ oh____ oh____".

Harmony

The harmonic language used by 2 Face Idibia revolves around the diatonic harmony exclusively with the secondary-dominant progressions in some cadential points. Several harmonic techniques employed in Afrobeat include, parallel harmony, triadic harmony and polarity. The application of parallel harmony in two parts is seen in an excerpt taken from “**My Love**” as shown in example below:

Voice

Can you feel the sound V-I-P and 2-face burn it down just to make you bounce al-ong jump ar-ound

In **See Me So**, two part and three part harmony is seen and it is sparsely distributed in the music which is mainly an expression of a solo performer. Overlapping harmony is evident in the music for example in bars 35 and 36:

eh ah eh bro-ther eh see me as your brother see me as ur bro-ther

Also, two part harmony is seen moving in parallel motion (in bar 42);

Voice

we are all gif-ted and uni-que in our own di-ffer-ent ways cos we are one and the same one stru-ggle

A striking feature of Afrobeat harmony is the frequent use of polarity in the music. An example is found in **My Love is here to Stay**. This song is built on a mid-tempo pattern with elements of calypso, Reggae, hip-hop and Dance hall styles. The harmonic progression of the music include the practice of harmonizing a melody in 2nds 3rd, and at the octaves. The music is interspersed with the solo taking the lead and the response following at intervals in a two and three part harmony format. The call which also serves as the verse maintained a medium range from the starting point bar 18 to the first beat of bar 21.

6
Voice
tru lylove you and you are my num-ber one...
once up-on a time I met this love-ly la- dy... it's am-a -

8
Voice
zing how she touched my soul...
Juh, I can't de-ny it No, I can't des-cribed it Ba

RESPONSE (CHORUS) CALL (LEAD VOCAL)

There is also a part doubling at an octave apart in the chorus section, examples in bar 9 to bar 17.

8
Voice
frea-king ar-ound cuz you're my num-ber one My love is here to stay_ won't go a way, i

12
Voice
pro-mise to_ love you e - ve - ry- day_ Oh ma Che rie, no break-ing me_ cuz I

Form/Structure

The songs by 2 Face Idibia is slightly longer in duration. Furthermore, most of his songs are captioned in the verse-chorus form. Irregular patterns of verses and choruses occur in some of his songs like **For Instance** which provides an example of this practice. After proceeding twice through a predictable verse-prehook-chorus sequence, the song continues with two more verse-prehook sections without the chorus, which seems to begin but then fails to continue as anticipated.

Another recurring formal element in the songs of 2 Face Idibia is the use of repetition to reinforce the lyric statement and establish the melody in the listener's mind. The song below (**African Queen**: bars 13-21) containing this type of chorus, demonstrates this particular preference for short statements.

12
Voice
star I love you just the way you are you are my Af-ri-can queen Girl of my dream

15
Voice
you take me where I've ne-ver been you make my heart go ting-a-ling-a-ling oh

17
Voice
you are my Af - ri - can queen girl of my_ dream

19
Voice
And you re-mind me of a thing And that is the Af-fi-can beau-ty_____

The singer also employs repeated hook statements by backing voices, to which the lead voice adds further melodic and lyric ideas. **My Number One** and **I dey feel like** involves a repeated hook followed by further melodic development. Backing vocals are also regularly used to create call-response patterns that play an important role in the black pop crossover songs.

Conclusion

The analysis of the music of 2 Face Idibia demonstrates that several western and African elements were injected into his music. The composer showed beyond doubt that he could achieve substantial pop-chart success by adapting the musical language of Naija hip to create a pop hit. This article also supports the idea that 2 Face Idibia is a hip hop icon whose music undoubtedly represents a major breakthrough for black musicians in Nigeria. This is borne from the fact that he tends to write musical materials for mainstream audience, like his European counterparts. His music is allied with sweet melodies and happy, positive lyrics. His songs make use of devices such as simile, metaphor, and parallel or paradoxical statements to create distinctive and evocative images

thus making him one of the most poetic pop lyricists in Nigeria. Innocent 2Face Idibia should therefore be considered a significant innovator in the history of popular songwriting in Nigeria.

Discography

Face To Face Album. Released 2004 under Kennis Label

African Queen;
Nfana Ibaga

Grace To Grace. Released 2006 under Kennis Label

E be Like Say;
For Instance;
If Love is a crime;
See me so;
True love

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