

The New Generation Newsletter

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DEALING WITH CYBER-BULLYING IN THE URBAN MUSIC INDUSTRY

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

Social media platforms have been rated as ideal platforms for artist to advertise music products but also advertise themselves as brands and grow a wide fan base by gaining a lot of followers or subscribers to their accounts or channels. However, social media platforms have also been said to be propelling the crime of cyber-bullying which is stipulated in the Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act under Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA).

Of late, we have seen people complaining of posts social media influencers posted about them but also artists complaining that their social media accounts have been hacked. Some have sued and demanded apology plus a compensation before the court of laws; one recent case has been about Joshua Chisa Mbele who was sued by the President's son, Pastor Nick Chakwera following what he posted about him on Facebook. Joshua Chisa Mbele was demanded to apologise but also pay 3 Million as compensation.

Similarly, urban artists, Blaze and Wikise have expressed disclaimers on what is sometimes posted on their social media pages saying their account had been hacked.

Commenting on this development in general, urban music artists agreed that the issue of cyber-bullying is on the rise but expressed that as public figures they believe that there is no such thing a bad publicity in the industry hence it is not wise to react to social media posts even



Social media platforms currently in trend.

those that are defaming in context.

"There is nothing as bad publicity for an artist in the urban music industry. One can make a name out of bad publicity on the social media, it's just a matter of how you handle the negative publicity. If one is focused and has knowledge on how to handle the worst then cyber-bullying can be a chance rather than a challenge to the artists," said Blaze.

Young urban artists emphasizes that they see cyber-bullying as free-marketing hence one must embrace it and make out the best out of it. They say, being the subject of discussions on social media is necessary and vital for an artist success in the urban music industry.

>> Page 2

“Cyber-bullying needs to be redefined”- Mikozi

<< Page 1

“In these digital times, cyber bullying exists and will always exist. You cannot fight it. Therefore artists needs to take cyber-bullying to their advantage. When people are talking about you on social media they are indirectly marketing your name for free and this makes your name trendy. Being a trendy artist is very vital in the urban music industry,” said Gattah.

Upcoming artists are recommended to have specialised people to manage their social media accounts so that they properly handle and manage issues of cyber-bullying to their advantage if they can't manage to do so on their own.

On the other hand, social media influencers commented that the relevant authorities should take an initiative of simplifying the concept to many in the urban music industry.

“Cyber bullying needs close attention and a clear distinction made on what cyberbullying is and what is not and to what extent can what fans or other users can say about a public figure be equivalent to defamation by the authorities.

Artists are public figures who should always expect public attention and reaction. Anything a public figure does is news worth. One's private life is limited upon being a public figure. What they do attracts various reactions some positive some negative. Some confuse the negative reactions with cyber-bullying. So this offence need to



Bright Ekcess Chiligo-Cyber-bullying concept need close attention.

be redefined and closely monitored,” said, Founder of Mikozi Movement, Bright Chiligo popularly known as Excess.

According to the Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act section 86, one commits cyber-bullying when they make any request, suggestion or proposal which is obscene, lewd, lascivious or indecent but also if one threatens to inflict injury or physical harm to the person or property of any person.

TIPS ON HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL URBAN MUSIC ARTIST

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

Every talented and ambitious young artist in the urban music industry seeks and strives to be successful in the careers as artists. However, out of the many only a few young urban artist manage to get into the spotlight. This happens because of several factors but the common factor is lack of proper planning and management. Speaking to some of the young successful urban music artists and producers, they stressed out a few take home tips on how one can ensure their success in the industry.

“I advise young upcoming artists who seek to be successful to first of all make sure they are registered with authorities like Copyright Association of Malawi (COSOMA) to protect their music and artistic copies from the start. I urge all upcoming artists to also sign up and make use



Quest- Every artist has to register with COSOMA.

>> Page 3

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first publication of The New Generation Newsletter.

This publication aims at capturing exclusive entertainment but also edu-tainment news from Malawi's urban music industry. Through the publication we hope to entertain and inform the urban music audience but also to educate and inspire the young artist with talent and passion to be successful in the urban music industry and contribute to the development of our Nation, Malawi.

Thank you and Enjoy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Stein Malola

Becoming a successful urban music artist

<< Page 2

of all available digital/online platforms of music distribution; local but mostly international like Spotify, YouTube and Deezer, as these platforms provide a means for artists to make money through pay-downloads or streams," said award winning Quest.

"My advice is simple, whether you're a believer or not but if you want to be successful in urban music industry or any other industry you have to put God first. God has to come first, have faith and work hard towards achieving your goals and it shall come to pass," said Blaze.

"Upcoming artists have to be patient enough to watch the seed of their art slowly grow, don't rush it. One can't get mass recognition in an overnight so one needs to be patient but

also humble especially when things have start going on well for them. Don't transform into an arrogant self-centred person rather maintain being humble and willing to learn from others," said audio engineer and producer Stein.

"To every upcoming artist who seeks to be successful in the urban music industry must make sure that they are focused on their goals they set in their music career. Being focused is the key because once one is fully focused on achieving the goals, they work-hard even when times are difficult," said Gattah. All upcoming artist are urged to borrow a leaf from these renowned but young artists in the urban music industry to emerge successful in the industry.

DIGITAL PLATFORM IS THE WAY TO GO FOR URBAN MUSIC ARTISTS IN MALAWI?



Blaze Performing before the pandemic in 2020

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

As the world is evolving and developing in terms of technology and science, the Malawi urban music industry seems to be slowly keeping up with the development due to the poor communication, technological infrastructures and policies set in Malawi.

Gone are the days when artists were organising shows when releasing their albums, singles, mixtapes or Extended Playlists (E.P) just to sell

Compact Discs (CDs) copies of their songs but also made money from the entry fees. Nowadays, artists are releasing albums and selling their music through different platforms that the internet offers. These platforms include websites, networks like Spotify and Deezer but also WhatsApp whereby people pay through Mobile and Bank money transfers and receive the purchased albums or songs.

>> Page 4

URBAN ARTIST EMBRACE DIGITAL PLATFORMS



Quest- Artists must utilise all available digital platforms.

These platforms have become useful tools now more than ever as artists are able to interact, sell and hosts virtual shows with their audiences in these times of COVID-19 pandemic whereby mass public gatherings are prohibited.

Several young urban artists are in support of fully migrating from traditional means of marketing, selling or distributing their music products as it suits the current environment.

"Digital platforms are proving to be the best platforms for marketing, selling and distributing our music products both within and out of our borders. Unlike old times, people nowadays no longer buy CDs or listen music through CD players rather they just download the music to their smartphones or laptops. Therefore artists need to adjust and develop the culture of uploading their music products on the internet and reach their audiences," said Gattah.

This view is supported by many including the Mikozi Movement founder, Bright Excess Chiligo who says that digital way is the true way forward as global markets are capitalising on digital sales more than offline/traditional.

However, the artists are complaining about the

poor technological and communication infrastructures but also the policies that govern digital and electronic transactions and communications.

"Digital platforms are ideal for us urban artists in these current days. However, the internet costs in Malawi are high as such only proportion from our total population is able to afford the internet services. In other areas the internet is barely accessible due to poor network as a result of the presence of few or old network towers in these areas. If these issues are addressed by the authorities, we can have a lot of internet users and in return we can get to see our songs being downloaded and streamed by many.

Furthermore, the policies that govern the digital/internet platforms here in Malawi are not effective enough. The issues of piracy are a major concern as people can upload our music on their websites or other platforms for audience consumption without our consent or acknowledging our copyrights. Although we have Copyright Association of Malawi (COSOMA) they do not do much to help us with these kind of piracy on websites.

URBAN MUSIC INDUSTRY LACKS HUMAN AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES



Stein Malola Nkholola- Malawi has few producers with enough high end studio equipments

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

The Malawi urban music industry is one of the industries that has a lot of talented youth with potential to uplift the industry but it continues to face a lot of challenges that stagnate the development process of the industry.

According to the artists in the urban music, the industry faces a lot of challenges but the most common is the lack of human and technical resources that can enable the young talented artists to produce high end quality music products (audio and video) but also to penetrate through the international market.

"Our industry have a lot of talented young artists and producers that gives the industry a promising future. However, the industry doesn't

have enough individuals with expertise on how to manage an artists and take them to greater heights. This is one of the expertise that the industry is in need of and if we have individuals interested to the gap let them acquire the knowledge and help in developing the urban music in Malawi," said award winning artist, Quest.

The industry also lack technical resources that can allow the producers to produce high end quality music products for the artists and ensure that their music products stand a chance to compete on the international market. This lack of technical resources makes the cost of high end quality studios be slightly expensive for an upcoming artist.

LACK OF RESOURCES STAGNATES GROWTH OF MALAWI URBAN MUSIC INDUSTRY



High-end quality studios like these are few in Malawi.

“Yes we have talented young artists and producers in the industry but the problem is, we are short off high end equipment to enable both the artists and producers cook-up high quality music that can compete on the international markets. This is so because these equipment’s are expensive here in Malawi unlike in other countries as a result we have few professional and fully equipped studios and producers. This affects us artists as we have to pay high studio expenses

just to make sure our music is of better quality,” said Stein Malola Nkholama, a producer. These challenges have killed many young artists dreams and goals in their music career as many of the talented artists in the industry opt for cheap studios who eventually produce low quality music products which can’t even compete on the local market as such their songs only circulate among their friends and their communities and goes unrecognised by the mass audience.

PROFILE

NAME : Stein Malola Nkholoma.

BIRTH : 26th July 1995.

HOMETOWN : Blantyre.

RESIDENCE : Blantyre, Manja.

OCCUPATIONS : Entrepreneur,
Artist, Producer and Audio Engineer.

EDUCATION : Graduate in Bachelors of Science
in Information.

HOBBIES : Socializing and making music.

MOTIVATION : People who juggle between
school/work and Entrepreneurship/Business.

AMBITION : To become the most successful
producer in Malawi.

MALAWI URBAN MUSIC INDUSTRY, GOLD OR RAGS?



Urban Music Promoter, Eksess with veteran secular artist, Nkasa.

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

Malawi urban music industry is heavily saturated with artist most of which are the youth who are aspiring to make fame and fortune out of their art and talents in the industry either as artists or producers.

However, as much as the industry is heavily saturated with fresh young blood, the guarantee of success for these talented youth is minimal close to none. This is so because of the numerous challenges that exists in the industry but also the dynamic state of the industry and most artist fail get through the challenges and keep up with the continuous changes.

According to most renowned young urban artists, they acknowledge that one cannot solely depend on selling urban music or performing in shows to fully take care of themselves and their families especially in these times of COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is fair to say that our urban music industry compared to others doesn't pay off that much to the extent that artist can entirely depend on their career as urban music artists to pay all their bills. We have a lot of living witnesses who have been

in the urban industry for ages but are failing to support themselves and their families. I can say it is wise for renowned artist and upcoming to artists have a side hustle/business to fully be able to support themselves but also sustain their music career," said award winning artist popularly known as Gattah but born as Mike Nkhata.

They further said that for artists to survive, they need to be creative and have an entrepreneur mind-set to help them monetize almost everything in their life as an artists but also as an ordinary citizen.

"Urban music industry in Malawi doesn't pay off to be honest. This is so because of it's a dynamic industry, the audience always want new things, new kinds of music and concepts. For most artists and producers, it is hard to keep up to the continuous change in demand. Therefore, artists can only secure their financial stability by being creative and learn to invest in other business, using their fame in the industry to market for their business to their existing audience," said producer, audio engineer and Founder of Tonic City Studios, Stein Malola Nkholoma.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IS VITAL FOR SUCCESS IN URBAN MUSIC INDUSTRY



Award winning Quest- Artists must learn to manage their resources

However, other artists in the industry have objected that the industry doesn't pay off a great deal and that one needs to have different business to support their music career, themselves and their careers. They rather say that artists need skills and knowledge on how to manage themselves and their resources.

"It depends on ones knowledge as an artists because every field or industry pays how it pays, there is no industry that gives 100 percent success guarantee. It is just a matter of how one manages his/her resources and their lifestyles. Yes, I can recommend having a side business but this is not a must rather they should live up to their earning, be wise in spending and managing the financial resources," said award winning urban artist popularly known as Blaze but born as Blessings Ngwengwe.

It has been said that artists in the industry have to strive on uncovering creative ways of monetizing their art and talents other than through selling music and performing at shows. Artists can develop a lot of minor business activities from their art and talent only if they manage themselves well so as to sell their names as brands to the cooperative institutions just as it is

with the case of Eli Njuchi born Chifuniro Magalasi, who is now one of Telecommunications Network of Malawi (TNM) young brand ambassador.

"Artists should learn to manage themselves as brands name, they should understand that the image they put up to the public determines whether cooperative institutions can associate themselves with them or not. Furthermore they can use their names as clothing brands, print it on t-shirts, caps and backpacks then sell to their audiences. Last but not least they can work on monetizing their social media platform by engaging with their followers to build a wide base of followers and attract digital/online advertisers who seek social media users with mass followers," said award winning Quest, born Penjani Malata

Recently, one renowned urban music artist by the name Hayze Engola born as Sindiso... was recognised by Forbes as one of the young achievers in 2021 after he ventured into entrepreneurship and introduced his own clothing brand known as KNQR (Conquer). Hayze is also currently a board member of Blantyre City Football Club aside of being an urban music artist.

URBAN MUSIC ARTISTS FAULTS GOVERNMENT



Currently trending urban artists- Eli Njuchi (L) and Gattah (R)

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

Malawi's urban music industry as any other industry contributes to the Nation's economy through various mechanisms. As observed from other countries, the urban music industry has been taken seriously as a major contributor to the development of a nation's economy. The industry has the potential of attracting a worldwide audience and can generate foreign currency through hosting of various international shows and award events.

However, there has been an ongoing outcry among the young urban music artists that the government does not support and recognize the potential of the urban music that the youth are investing in to alleviate themselves but also alleviating our nation's economic state.

According to a retired urban music artist who is now a founder of Mikozi Movement, Bright Excess Chiligo, the government established Copyright association of Malawi (COSOMA) for all musicians, and we have Music Associations but these institutions are barely active. He said these mechanisms are not effective as they ought to be and this lags the development progress of the urban music industry and its ability to contribute to the nation's economy.

"Urban music does not gain support at all from the government. Yes, they gave musicians COSOMA and the right to form associations but these institutions function in a system that is not effective as it should be," said Excess.

Commenting on the ineffectiveness of the established institutions, award winning artist, Quest born Penjani Malata said the institutions like COSOMA reward royalties but only to a few artists in the industry who are mostly the veterans rather

than the youth.

"I think a few artists get support from the authorities. We are yet to get full recognition. COSOMA pays back royalties are paid to only a few artist in the music industry, most of the times it's the veteran musicians rather than the young artists in the urban industry," Quest commented.

The artists and producers has faulted government and relevant authorities for some of the problems that exists in the industry. They lamented that the failure of the government to support the urban music industry through the ministry of arts and culture is the main cause of some of the problems in the industry and this stagnant the growing process of the industry.

"Urban music industry doesn't get enough support from the government and relevant established authorities. Some of the problems that we face are high studio and production costs and this is so because of limited availability of High-end quality music recording and production equipment due to their high prices here in Malawi. As a result we have few studios with such equipment, meaning the studio owners have less completion and exploit us artists through high prices for studio sessions but also music productions. This creates a challenge to an upcoming artist who has to struggle to fund his career and watch it grow," said Gattah.

They artists laments that the government should consider the taxes and customs paid when importing high-end studio equipment so that a lot of people import and set up professional studios. In doing so they can be competition and the prices can be fair for every artists.

IT'S A STRUGGLE

BY KHUMBO SALANJE

Malawi's urban music industry is one of the industries that the youngsters are venturing into with high hopes that they would quickly become famous and rich as it is in the western countries urban music industries.

The increase in the number of the young urban music artists in Malawian industry is tremendous given that the urban music is now getting recognised and valued by corporations and other relevant audiences unlike the way it was a decade ago.

However, although urban music is now being recognised and valued, chances of emerging successful in an overnight are zero close to none in the industry and youngsters shouldn't have high expectations as they might be disappointed. The industry has underlying problems that have existed in the industry for a long time now and every artist venturing into the industry has to encounter in the day to day life as an artist.

Speaking to some of the settled young urban music artists, they identified some of the problems that exist in the industry and these problems stretch from financial to technical but also ethics and professionalism. Artists confessed that as much as some of the problems arise due to external factors most of the problems in the industry arise due to internal factors. This means that the artists, producers, the audience and other involved stakeholders' acts cause some of the existing problems in the industry.

One artist popularly known as Gattah but born as Mike Nkha-

ta expressed that financial problems are mostly common among the artists in the urban industry as every artist basically self-fund their music career unlike in other countries when they have record labels that sign and fund young and talented urban music artists.

"A lot of the youths in Malawi urban music are blessed with talent but they fail to showcase and realize their full potential in the industry because they lack enough financial resources to pay for their recording sessions, audio production and video production but marketing/promotion costs," said Gattah.

On the other hand, award winning artist Quest, born as Penjani Malata, pointed out that one of the problems in the urban music industry lies with the fans/listeners of the urban music as they perpetuate piracy and free sharing of our music.

"The problem we face lies with the audience. They developed the tendency of free-downloading and free-sharing of our music products through different platforms like WhatsApp and websites but also the popular application called Share It. This tendency tends to stagnate the development progress of an artist's career in the industry since we artists barely make enough returns compared to the investment that we pump in.

I would recommend that we execute an awareness campaign to educate the audience that the way to grow our industry is through supporting the idea of paying for the music either through pay-downloads, streaming or subscriptions but also directly from the artist," said Quest.

The last main problem identi-

fied by the artist is that there is lack of ethical and professional practice when dealing in the industry. Radio and big club Disk Jockeys (DJs) demand to be paid for one to enjoy airplay especially when they want to premier their new songs.

Artists also complain that producers lack professionalism as sometimes when they are paid to record and produce songs for upcoming artists, they delete the final songs and lie that the sessions were lost but never allow them to record again.

This was extended to the artists themselves and according to award winning artist popularly known as Blaze but born as Blessing Ngwengwe, artists lack a sense of professionalism when creating the content of their songs and how they take the urban music industry.

"The problem is that most of the young upcoming artists are venturing into the industry without any professional intentions, they just want to be famous and known that they have money or they drink beer and smoke marijuana. They don't see respect the industry as a career but as a fame acquisition tool as such their music content is just mediocre. Since they have resources to market their music they get the recognition but then the image they paint is that urban music is full of mediocres as such it is not valued and fully recognised as a lucrative industry," said Blaze.

These problems among many others reduce the chances of an upcoming young artist to easily rise to fame and fortunes even if they are very talented. It is always a struggle to survive in the urban music industry as it is in the jungle, only the fittest survives and emerge successful.

5 COMMON CHALLENGES EVERY UPCOMING ARTIST ANTICIPATE



In every industry that a person decides to venture in, there are challenges that one must encounter in order to achieve their goals and tasks. The urban music industry is not an exception. As any other industry, urban music in Malawi has erected walls that upcoming artist must climb or better still fly over in order to reach their goals in their career as an artist. From the numerous challenges that have been identified by young but settled artists in the industry, the listed 5 challenges were common among the artist.

1. The industry has brown envelope radio and club Disc Jockey's (DJ's). For your songs to get airplay or to be played in the clubs you have to be willing to pay something to them otherwise your music will go unrecognised.

2. Music promoters seldom promotes upcoming urban music artist as such upcoming artists strive to self-promote their music products on the market.

3. Upcoming artists barely realize profits/returns. When upcoming artists are trying to make a name in the industry they are forced to perform for free as supporting artists at shows. The organisers basically doesn't pay upcoming artists rather it is said that the artist is gaining free exposure.

4. Once in the spotlight, it becomes a challenge to maintain the fame and be accepted by the audience as a settled artist because of lack of self-management and consistency by the artists.

5. The industry requires connections for one to survive and succeed. People work for favours, so an upcoming artists need to be in the circle of those with connections in the industry. One must buy his way to the influential people in the industry to be recognised in the urban music industry.