QUALITY ASSURANCE:
THEATRE, MEDIA AND THE CREATIVE ENTERPRISES

Gowon Ama Doki
Ted Anyebe
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Music in the 21st Century: The Fate of the TV Song</td>
<td>Simeon Tivolumun TsaV &amp; Kunde-Nomyar, Gabriel Tor</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Theatre Practice in Nigerian University Theatres</td>
<td>Iyamah Chijioke Yankson &amp; Akpughe, Oghenemudiaga Praise</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance in Dance and Choreography</td>
<td>Dosumu Lawal Yeside</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance and the Business of Teaching Creative Arts in Nigeria</td>
<td>Ekweariri, S. Chidiebere, Ph.D</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance on Performance Aesthetics in Nigerian Theatres</td>
<td>Ekweariri, Chidiebere S. Ph.D &amp; Ibe, Chinyere Mary</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis of Content: The Need for Quality Assurance in Igala Video Films</td>
<td>Ali Ojodale Umar</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolving Theatrical Culture in Nigeria: A Critical Search for the KPIM of Quality Assurance</td>
<td>John Obinwa Igbonekwu</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance in Play-Writing and Production at National Theatrical Events: An Overview of Drama Entries at National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST), 2011.</td>
<td>Denja Abdullahi</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal for Quality Assurance in Film Production in Nigeria</td>
<td>Adebola Ademese, Ph.D</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Media, Interventions and Education</td>
<td>Mnena Abuku</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Imperative for Transformation and Quality Enhancement in Theatre Education in Nigeria</td>
<td>Ofonime Inyang &amp; Patrick Ebewo</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetence and Sheer Negligence in and Towards Education and Quality of Education in Tertiary Institutions</td>
<td>Ezinne Igwe</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of Media Culture for Quality Assurance in Governance: The NICo Examples</td>
<td>Nelson Ebi Campbell</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring Quality in the Nigerian Theatre Design: The 21st Century Economic Imperatives</td>
<td>Adeoye, Aderemi Michael</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance in the Theatre: Theatre for Development (TFD) as an Interrogative Tool.</td>
<td>Komolafe Ayodele Michael</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rise of Stand-Up Comedy Genre in Nigeria: From Nothing to Something in Artistic Entertainment</td>
<td>Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma, PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A PROPOSAL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN FILM PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

ADEBOLA ADEMESO Ph.D
Department of Theatre Arts and Music
Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos.

Introduction
Film production in Nigeria has assumed both economic and cultural constructs while the aesthetic dimension is left to suffer in the hands of the producers and marketers on one hand, and the film enthusiasts on the other. This is made possible because of the dearth of film critics on the structural parameters for gauging quality films that are being produced daily in Nigeria.

Fundamentally, films are produced for commercial purposes and preservation of the socio-cultural heritage of a race but it should not be to the detriment of the aesthetic value of the filmic mode. The pecuniary values for film production in Nigeria shall be reassessed against the backdrop of the dynamics of the theory and criticism of films, and perhaps this exercise may re-orientate the viewers’ choice of film thereby creating a challenge for film producers towards producing quality films. If profit making is the focus of an average film producer, and the quality of the film is substandard within the scope of theory and criticism and the viewers are well informed about film aesthetics, then such film is bound to meet a bad market.

The Nigerian Film Industry (Nollywood) is a brand that can stand the test of time, especially in terms of prolificity of film production and manpower development. The industry accommodates the trained and the untrained personnel who should ordinarily have no business with the industry but because the benchmarks for standard are not structured in a manner that viewers’ choice would be guided and protected. Though film as a medium is a foreign mode and in technology but the arts and contents therein should not be separated from the cultural environment of the film. This is where the film activists and critics should come to the rescue of viewers who are being assaulted daily by what they see on their screens. The activists and film critics should also be empowered to challenge the produces of substandard films in a viewers’ law of courts for producing and exhibiting films that are capable of defrauding the viewers’ time, money and sensibility. If only viewers can be protected beyond the sexual obscenity, cultural and religious compromises and manipulations there will be a quality assurance in the film industry as we have it in the drugs and foods sector in Nigeria. This may be going beyond the mandate of the Nigerian Censors Board saddled with the responsibility of regulating the ethical practices in film production rather than supervising and monitoring the quality of films, especially in the areas of technical and artistic capabilities. Cultural practices and moral instructions and pedagogues should not be the only ultimate goals of film produced in Nigeria. Therefore, film should be considered as a product that can withstand the international landscape for consumption in its entire ramifications.

Watching and not Studying Films
The attempt in this essay is to provide a basic parameter for watching a quality film that would make a viewer to have fulfillment in the money and time spent. A viewer does not have to be a critic or practitioner in the film industry but he must be assisted, through this study, in the choice of films he or she would rate as quality films. Film study is within the purview of theory, history and criticism as against viewing film for entertainment, information dissemination and cultural awareness. Once a producer realises what viewers may likely look for as gauge in quality film then the production standard would not be compromised. If film viewing audience is made to be critical then the best would come from the Nigerian film studios. The general feelings usually expressed by viewers of films in Nigeria, after watching films run contrary to the verbal expressions. Some lack the lexiconographic or semantics that best describe their feelings thereby resorting to the use of clichés such as “very nice”, “good”, “hilarious”, “very entertaining”, “incredible”, “fantastic”, “captivating” and so on, if the films catch their fancy. But if otherwise, such films are described as “very bad”. But the question is, what is “good” or “bad” in a film? From critical point of view a film cannot be said be totally “bad” or “good” because it is a collaborative medium or arts, where there are different areas of fields interplay in information dissemination and entertainment. Different arts of a film must have significant impact on the viewing audience. This is why it is essential for the viewer to be well equipped with the right expressions or language that best describe his experience in a film. His description of a film can go a long way in helping the producer to develop his film arts along the filmic taste and needs of viewing audience. A conscious effort on the part of the viewing audience at
being selective and critical of film can indeed promote standard production of film in Nigeria. Beyond the viewers’ selectivity, the advertising agents should also be ethical by not deceiving the prospective viewers through incredible trailers and media hypes. The advertising agencies and practitioners and the media houses should be credible and ethical in the practice of their profession by examining the content and context of the products being advertised to the publics. It is also important that the cinema houses exhibit well-produced films because this may also impact on their credibility.

**Approaches to Production and Watching of Films**

The most significant step a producer can take at producing quality film is to be sure of how to make use of the following approaches in film production:

1. Artistic Approach
2. Technical Approach
3. Management Approach

These approaches are also essential in determining the three stages of film production - preproduction, production and post-production - which the viewing audience may not necessarily be aware of. What is important to the viewers is the end product and not the process. A film producer must be conscious of the approaches that the viewers would adopt in analysing his film. This is why it is significant that a film producer and the viewers are to be on the same page as far as the arts and the aesthetic of films are concerned. A film produce should not attempt to underrate or underestimate the critical capacity of the viewers.

In their book, Petrie, et al. (2011) examined the diversity of film as a narrative form, that requires careful exploration within the ambit of experience that must be shared within a limited time and space; between the viewers and the filmic medium (screen). The challenges faced by viewers in the course of watching films through observation and imaginative experience of life’s complexities are x-rayed in this book so that viewers can develop a higher perceptive ability for filmic narrative. But the approaches in this essay are meant to help viewers form a critical opinion on how a producer can improve his film arts.

**Artistic Approach**

Film as a medium for information dissemination and entertainment is both “intentional and unintentional art” (Adler et al., 1996:16). It is deliberately crafted to present a message, and it is unintentional because the opinion that the viewer would form from what has been seen may not be that of the producer. The critical perspective to films is essential to the growth and development of the industry. It is an aspect that is lacking in the Nigerian film industry. However, the artistic approach to the practice of film either in terms of production or viewing (watching) is incontrovertible as it helps to make the producers and viewers to have the opportunity of achieving the same goal of better film productions. In fact audience should be made to determine the filmic contents through critical perspective to the artistic components of a film, such as, the story idea and contents, screenplay writing, dialogue composition, acting, art directing, casting, etc.

In examining the story idea and story contents, a film viewer should be guided by the basic principles of story telling, narrative techniques and what constitute story. Most story tellers in Nigerian film industry start their story well, and in midway, the story drops its direction. It means that such story does not have fictional source (Minot, 1971:136) that can sustain the story to the end. Every story must have the three levels of the beginning, middle and the end. The suspense and conflicts in the story must be balanced against the characters’ will-power, and action and dialogue. Plausibility in plot structure and dynamism must also be interfaced with a point of view i.e. the means of perception (Minot, 1971:168) with a conscious effort at achieving desired narrative tension, place and time, theme, tone, symbol and style (Minot, 1971:168-247). Every story in a film is a literature in motion; therefore the literary aspect of a story construction must be fulfilled. Having a good story for a film mode may not be the ultimate if such a story is not formatted into a screen play properly. In this wise, a story teller may require the services of a screen-writer who possesses the skill (Wilber, et al., 2003:183-203) and the dramatic genre places more challenges on writing for the screen. The structural composition of screen writing can affect a good story if it is not properly handled by the specialist just as art directing can be a nightmare for a well conceived film. A film director should be distinguished from the following: Arts Director and Director of Photography. In Nigeria, we hardly separate these because of the low budget a producer operates with.
A typical Nigerian film producer is also the director of photography and arts. At the end of the day, one aspect of film production is given preference to the detriment of others. Arts director should be able to harness all the artistic and technical resources at his disposal, including talents, in order to achieve the best production. Casting of talents may not necessarily be done by the director as it is done in Hollywood where casting agents are given the job to do (Kolker, 2006). It is done in other to give room for division of labour and attention for details. However, it must be noted that film producer in Nigeria places premium on the commercial value rather than the artistic or aesthetic value of film thereby allowing viewers and marketers to dictate the choice of talents that must be included in the film. The result of this is that, there is imbalance conviviality between the story contents and the characters (talents) like the proverbial two strange bed fellows. The implication of this imbalance on the viewers is that it creates a complexity in psychological reflection, thereby giving room for previous films in the present films, and an attempt at critical comparison between the previous and the new films. Arts director should be independent in his choice of talents, no doubt but this has an overriding effect on economic import of film positively or otherwise. Artistic approach to the way films are viewed by audience can help in appreciating the aesthetic value that a producer planned to achieve.

Technical Approach

Film as a genre relies on technological availability and manipulation. Film is an electronic gadget meant to convey message through picture (action) and sound. An awareness should be created in the minds of the viewing audience that there is a distinction between the artistic and the technical aspects of film production for them to appreciate. Some of the essentials of filmic components that are rooted in technical ambiance are cinematography, sound and sound track, special effects, costumes and make up, location or setting, editing, etc. If film viewers are made to understand the roles of these technical elements in a film, their critiques of films would be broadened, and film producer would be conscious of the filmic aesthetics of his audience as well.

Cinematography is a conscious story-telling through picture and this picture is created through the eye of the camera. Therefore, a director of photography should be able to know the scope and limitation of his camera especially in term of visual composition and colour dynamics. Attempt of an individual to have access to video camera because he or she has the resources should not be enough reason for professional practice in film production. He or she should have adequate knowledge of the types and functions of his or her camera. Cameras create pictures in motion; therefore motion picture language is required in order to manipulate camera lenses for expressive pictures. The various visual elements of the optics and chemistry with the skills of instrument in film making exemplify the aesthetics of shots, camera, movement, angles and modes of transition. Cinematography should be regarded as the motion picture language and the language of film in this regard must be distinctively expressive through training.

Motion Picture Language

The expressive language of the motion picture is not in the power of verbal expression of the film writer but how a writer is able to understand the arts, limitations and the scope of the camera. Motion picture is strictly a moving image that tells story within the film time and space. The screen’s triangular shape is expected to tell the viewer a lot about a picture and its immediate environment.

Motion picture is presupposed to be a universal language: that is you do not need to understand the verbal expressions of the picture (actor as the case may be) before you can get the message. It is a language understood by everybody from different races. It is a language that cuts across a heterogeneous society. The oriental film or motion picture is able to communicate to the diverse audience in the world because of its powerful nature of adapting itself to the human characteristics in terms of psychology: extrinsic and intrinsic, and philosophy. Camera cannot say everything at once but can at least try not to miss anything out of what it has chosen to see. It must express the thought of the picture without verbal expression.

Before the advent of the sound in film, motion picture had always been a silent art. It did not rely on verbal expressions of the actor. The beautiful 'voice of poetry' and the dexterous movement of the actors were coalesced in a well expressive motion picture. It meant that silence was the pure and uninterrupted language of the motion picture. The motion picture language could be ambiguous or perhaps not communicate any meaning. It could be a pile of incomprehensible pictures, if the camera language is not well understood and manipulated by the director of photography. The knowledge of the scope and limitation of the camera would allow a lot of creative liberties available to
the director to manifest when the camera expresses itself on WHAT, WHEN and HOW its wants the viewer to see the picture.

We must note here that sound is a secondary language of the motion picture. The visual or optical image converted into electronic signal is what is seen as a visible screen image or picture by the viewer. Therefore, motion picture could be termed as a deaf man's language when the sound is removed. The ability of the director to use or see camera as a man's eye depends on how he himself has developed his camera eye.

Generally, the Nigerian film industry has been tagged “prosaic”. It means that we prefer to express our action through word, and what we can easily allow the camera to say or do are said and done by the actors/characters in a film. We assume that speech is primary on screen just as it is on stage. Word should rather be seen as secondary, when the action cannot be expressed by the camera. The motion picture language can be explained largely within the context of visual compositions. However, beyond the camera skills, viewers should be able to determine the pitch, mood, timing, and effects of sound, track, special effects, costumes, make up, location and the overall theme and aesthetic value of the film. They serve as para-linguistic elements in a film; therefore, they have to be properly measured to convey the actual meaning the producer has in mind. They are also cultural and artistic in nature and ambience especially in film evaluation. The technical ambiance of a film is instigated by the visual composition and treatment of images and the spatial environment. It propels the quality assurance in a film production. Film is a motion camera at work and the picture must be critical of the actions in film in order to give force to every details. More picture is however, needed in a film rather than expressing action through dialogue.

The Management Approach
The overriding effect of budgeting in film production cannot be ignored. It either makes or mars a filmic economic or aesthetic value. Budget determines the nature and scope of film especially in terms of the technical and artistic resources and manpower. The camera type, location sourcing or building, casting or talents hiring, story and script-writing, editing, special and sound effects, etc. have significant impact on the budgeting skills in a film production. If a producer is operating on a low budget, the filmic content should be done in ways that the aesthetic and economic values of the film maintain equilibrium for the viewing audience. The viewers must have value for the money and time spent on film. The trust viewers have in watching a film at a particular point in time should not be betrayed. The value and quality trust be safe-guarded.

Apart, from budgeting, planning for a film production is perhaps the most important factor. A producer that hastily produces a film without adequate planning is likely to spend more money on a film that achieves little or no result. The goal of every producer is to reap high profit but this should not be to the detriment of what the standard practice should be. In planning the production of a film, every aspect of the law, including the copyright law must be observed. The artistic law is within the region of theory criticism but the copyright, civil and commercial (entertainment) rules of engagement should be basic in writing, producing and exhibiting film and these are entrenched in the business law as recognised by the constitution of every nation in the world.

In appraising the management aspect of a film, the means and processes through which a film is circulated and exhibited to the viewers must be considered together with the publicity and awareness packaging sometimes how a film is presented to the public may determine its acceptance and appreciation. Although there are quite a number of badly produced films that have enjoyed good publicity and attraction from the viewing audience at the end of which the public had to grumble bitterly. Part of management of a film is to ensure a postmortem through which the viewers' survey, comments and criticisms should be collated for the purpose of analysing the commercial, artistic and technical strengths and weaknesses of the film for future purposes, commercial of box office success of film should be a measurement for gauging the overall success of a film. A successful film should have enormous impact on the viewing public especially in the skillful handling of all the areas of production, exhibitions and documentation.

Film and Social Engagement
The greater number of film public in Nigeria and Africa is dominated by the film enthusiasts who love to watch films for the purpose of entertainment and relaxation. The ideological contents of films are not being given a place it requires in a society. The social contents of a film are significant to the
growth and development of a state in transition. The power of films to educate and mobilize for social action should also be of interest to the producer and viewer. Though, if wrongly applied, it may be viewed as an assault on the government of the day. Since film is a literature in motion, major works of the Nigerian novelists, poets and playwrights can be transposed into film mode for wider circulation and documentation. Viewer’s film-taste should include watching novels rather than reading novels in view of the place of the electronic media in formal and informal education and campaign for freedom and liberty.

Viewers should be provided with a wider range of choice in film beyond the general classification of films according to genres such as action, thriller, comedy, crime, romance, adventure, horror, animation, drama, science-fiction, history, mythology, etc. Though, the Nigerian film industry has not reached the level of this classification because of its low level of technology and practices. The therapeutic nature of film in addressing the social dislocation in a society cannot be underestimated. Film enthusiasts should advocate for functional films: the films that address the socio-cultural needs of the society just like the daily needs for the development of man and society (Miller, et al., 1998:90-181) and the approaches to the production of film should explore the cultural dialectics and the material needs of the contemporary society (Berger, 1992:3-91). In an information society, producers and the viewers should maintain a level playing-ground where the issues addressed in films are mutually agreed upon. The technology and science of film production should not be in abstraction. They should be accessible to the two (producer and viewer).

Conclusion
Film is a cultural expression that is rooted (in contents) in a particular culture apart from its science and technology. However, the quality assurance can only be guaranteed if the viewing audience can be made to be more conscious, selective and critical of the films they watch. It may also be helpful if producer’s skill can also be a determining factor as the media should be made to serve the public and not the other way round (Oso, 2012) in creating an informed society. Film producer’s artistry can be a major force in information dissemination and entertainment but the strategy must be embedded in the knowledge that would be understood by the audience. The artistic, technical and the management viewpoints in film production should guide the critical evaluation of film.

References