

AGM Plus Addis Ababa

PANEL DISCUSSION 2

GETTING TO KNOW THE ETHIOPIAN MUSIC SCENE

Date: Friday, 11 November 2016

Venue: Goethe-Institut, Addis

Ababa

This session explored the state of the Ethiopian music sector, with particular focus on opportunities and challenges for both local and foreign players.

PANELISTS

- Henock Temesgen – Music educator and musician (Ethiopia)
- Sisay Mengstie – Selam Festival/Selam Sounds (Ethiopia)
- Dicken Marshall – Record label owner and consultant (Ethiopia and Rwanda)
- Dawit Yifru – President, Ethiopian Musicians Association (Ethiopia)
- Moderator: Sertse Fresebhat – Music critic and radio host (Ethiopia)

Sisay Mengstie

- There are only two music festivals in Addis Ababa.
- More focus needs to be placed on production and record labels.
- Addis Ababa needs to attract more international festivals.
- Major challenges to the music sector includes current policy and systems.
- Taxes for festivals identified as a major hindrance.
- Institutional capacity within companies and organisations is very low.
- Focus is needed on the establishment of production facilities and record labels to improve the sector
- Extremely difficult for foreign artists to obtain visas to perform in Ethiopia.
- Lack of institutional capacity, resources, practical experience and international exposure has been identified as being major challenges for artists.
- Difficult to obtain sponsorships.
- Festival organisers focus on a business model that may not be an appropriate vehicle for festivals.

Dawit Yifru

- Music in Ethiopia is free. There is a copyright law but it is not being implemented.
- Creative culture and knowledge exists. However, the situation of artists living in poverty is one of the biggest issues. Artists cannot lift themselves out of poverty due to the lack of intellectual property royalty collection agencies. For example, plays on radio are not being counted.
- The consumer is still enjoying music while artists have no social safety



- nets. Health insurance and social security are not really present.
- Copyright policy was reviewed about two years ago.
 - Artists do not understand copyright law.
 - Artists lack a unified voice, which can be heard if they become active through the Musicians Association, for example.
 - Of the 2 200 members of the Musicians Association, only 20 or so artists are active within the association.

Dicken Marshall

- Opportunities and possibilities have kept Dicken active in Ethiopia and Rwanda.
- The sheer amount of diversity and different styles of music alone is huge.
- Without a collective management society, the copyright law will not work.
- Huge opportunity exists for a united collective agency.
- Main obstacles is the lack of evidence related to how much music is exported and how much may need to be paid out to global agencies.
- Why are brands not paying for local content on radio?
- Research into these areas will support and assist the process greatly.

Henock Temesgen

- Identify opportunities for younger musicians, mixing Ethiopian sounds with other genres.
- There are many young musicians playing Ethio-jazz. Mainstream media does not know about them.
- No professional recording studios in Addis Ababa, mainly home studios.
- There is a lack of education facilities for technical professionals such as studio engineers.
- High calibre musicians are lacking recording and technical facilities.

Q&A

Key questions from Ethiopian artists focused mainly on how to resolve the lack of royalty collections, how to get access to international performance opportunities and how to increase local recording opportunities/facilities.

- Musical contributions have been given freely to the public with thousands of songs being sold on flash drives. This has to change.



- Television channels can create opportunities for music such as 24 hours of music content.
- Music is everywhere but musicians are constantly under threat of erratic earnings and very seldom receive justifiable economic benefit from their music.
- Policy makers are not aware or familiar with how the music industry works.
- There are no schools for the production of music.
- What about distribution?

Music schools such as Jazz Amba and Yared Music School offer music training but music is almost nonexistent in public schools. Some private music schools (NGOs) run voluntary training programmes at elementary schools. This, however, is not part of the school curriculum.