

GENGETONE; A MUSIC OF LANGUAGE, THEMES AND IDENTITY

The 2000's were the golden years of Kenyan music. In the early 2000's, Kenya enjoyed a heavy dose of Genge music. It was a breath of fresh air in a country that had been under the heavy influence of foreign music such as Bongo, Kwaito, Lingala and Rhumba.

18 years later, amidst a very familiar outcry from Kenyan audiences on the lack of a Kenyan sound and the saturation of the Kenyan airwaves with foreign music, Ethic gang stirred the airwaves with their new sing along tune, Lamba Lolo.

That marked the initiation of gengetone genre into the Kenyan music scene.

Gengetone is a 'music of identity, language and themes.' To the ears of many Kenyans, who 'accidentally' perceive it, it is the 'music of the devil'. It speaks much of a 'poor upbringing' of its creators, the incivility and lack of culture of its listeners. It is a music of rebellion. A dare towards the taboo of the society.

Gengetone has a bad reputation. For a genre that is now identified as the 'Kenyan sound' it has attracted more backlash than support. Yet, the number of views it amasses is surprising.

This paper seeks to analyze 'Gengetone' and the identity it portrays, the role of language and the themes that are highlighted by this music.

It seeks to ask the following questions:

1. Who are the artistes in gengetone?
2. What are the themes mostly portrayed in this music?
4. What is the culture associated with Gengetone?
5. What is the future of gengetone and how can it be improved to ensure sustainability whilst elevating the quality of the music now commonly referred to as the 'Kenyan sound'?

The findings of this study will be important in the discussion of Kenyan music and offer suggestions to improve it.

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