

Ade Radio of Idi Arere: Re-introducing Nigeria's Pioneering DJ (Posted on Facebook on 04/25/2020)

DJ Cuppy is Nigeria's most popular celebrity DJ in 2020. But six decades before her time, 85-year-old Pa Aderemi Adeoye (aka Ade Radio) capitalized on the demand for electronic sound and commercial music to launch an incredible career in what we know today as disk-jockeying. A trained electronics repairer, Ade Radio took sound technology and artists to popular and obscure places. From small to large communities, city halls to village squares, naming ceremonies to coronations, private to public events, Ade Radio's career complemented and diversified art consumption during the era of Yoruba traveling theater, popularized by Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, and Oyin Adejobi, among others.

Baba has tangible evidence to show for his glorious career, which ended abruptly in 2013 when he became visually-impaired—a state of being he described as “Ipe ni 'ja” (a charge to fight). When his multi-storeyed building (where he still lives) was completed in 1967, it was the most unique and the most modern private home around Ode Aje in Ibadan. Electronic gadgets, the relics of Ade Radio's past and unending love for sound, adorn his living room, forcing members of my gang (including Funmi Saliu who facilitated the interview) to reflect over a past now manifesting in streams of endless stories, which Baba told, as Joy, his companion dog, interjected with barks.

Ade Radio was not just a DJ—he trained generation after generation of sound technicians and rented out generators and instruments to artists. Those who blame the first Nigerian coup for truncating the country's path to industrialization have a point—Baba was making amplifiers in the 1960s! With political stability and the right economic policies, he could have made globally competitive electronics. “They know I'm from the Oloolu compound, they won't try to lock my equipment,” Baba, who is now a JP, puts spiritual protection derived from being a descendant of the dreadful Oloolu masquerade, in conversation with what scholars termed “technological determinism” in describing occupational hazard.

Ade Radio was a gatekeeper of artistic stardom. In the era of rarity of private ownership of electronics, DJs like him determined people's musical aesthetics. They held the key to sound technology. Hence, they could shape auditory quality of songs by making the best voice and beat to sound like crap! They made stars, helping the first generation of Fuji artists to record their songs which they would then take to promoters and recording studios. Therefore, the story of artists does not start with when they produce records and become famous; rather, it begins with the willingness of “radionics” like Ade Radio to tolerate their mediocrity. Ade Radio “discovered” Epo Akara, who would later become a successful artist under Omo Aje record label of the present Olubadan (king of Ibadan) and his brother Alhaji Ambali Adetunji. The story of Omo Aje Records and K1 is coming soon, like a Nollywood film!















