

Do You Want to Kill Me? By Saheed Aderinto. Posted on Facebook on December 29, 2023

That's how I feel when people keep telling me to write a book on amala, while I'm still trying to finish the book on Fuji. The full manuscript of the Fuji book project was due to the publisher in June. So, I'm 6 months behind schedule. Las las, we go run am. Elede a d'Oyo...

Last week Thursday, I organized a workshop on "Mr. Fuji: Barry Wonder," the first episode of The Fuji Documentary, scheduled to premiere in Ibadan on February 10. Fifteen scholars in the fields of film and popular culture watched the 115-minute documentary film ahead of time and engaged me on several issues. Their comments and critiques would help me improve on the final work.

I was expecting the chair of the workshop, Dr. Olusegun Soetan, to give a hash critique and lead the entire reviewers against me—just to restage the Ibadan-Egba wars of the 19th century. Allowing an Egba to chair a seminar of an Ibadan was a bad idea. I was like, "Isola, what did you do to yourself?" Thankfully, fear catch am! He buried the Sodeke spirit and allowed Ogunmola's child to have a field day!

Dr. Soetan wasn't my biggest fear because I know how to deal with Abeokuta's predictable attack. It's innate. My biggest anxiety came from a fellow Ibadan, Dr. Wale Oni. I have always feared Dr. Oni's film commentaries. But his reviews of "Anikulapo" and "Jagun Jagun" scared me to death. I activated the Ija'gboro/civil disturbance/street fighting spirit, for which Ibadan, my ancestral home, is notorious for. "We shall meet at Idi-Aro police station. Two fighting l'oma je. Olopa ma ko everybody"--I assured myself.

Boom! He sent me a short note: "It's your first, and it's awesome that you can pull all this through without a major background in the industry. I'm impressed. In fact, I was emotional watching it and shed some tears of joy while savouring the ode to Barry as performed by Aisha Yakub (Lady Barry). Brief but emotive." After reading his note, in my mind, I was like—I don catch am! O ti wo se!

Curating emotive feelings is central to how I imagined "Mr. Fuji: Barry Wonder." In a conventional film, this is easily achievable because reality can be fictionalized to produce maximum effect for the audience. In a documentary film, where everything, including the spoken and the unspoken words, is expected to be facts, generating real emotions, without asking the cast to fake their feelings, could be hard.

It didn't take me long to realize that getting the casts, which included some performers, across genres, to sing or chant both original and recreations of Barrister's songs throughout the film could help. This way, the audience would not only remember Barrister, but also their own friends, families, communities, life histories, Yoruba worldview e.t.c., in a complex web of emotive memories traversing time and collapsing space. The consequences of this time and space travels cannot be exhausted...

Second, I realized I could tap into the universality of music and human experience to curate emotive feelings for the film and the subjects. Regardless of race, ethnicity, location, music preference, and class, the global audience of "Mr. Fuji: Barry Wonder" would easily connect with transcultural issues such as the religious origins of secular music, the grass-to-grace stories of superstars, love, gender, and erotic passion, trials, triumphs, and tribulations,

forgiveness and reconciliation, public politics and protest art, creativity, global travels, fandom and stardom, self-making and identity construction, sickness, death, and immortality. It is this transculturality, which doesn't lose sight of specific historical and cultural contexts, that continues to fascinate me about The Fuji Documentary.
Compliments of the season, everyone!

Yours Sincerely in Fuji:
Emperor Saedo Okola and His International Fuji Lions