

“Napoli Like Lagos”: The African Puff Daddy @53 (Posted on Facebook on 11/27/2020)

Wasiu Alabi Pasuma, the African Puff Daddy, turned 53 today. Happy birthday Baa Wasila, Omo Olope, Omo Iyawo Anabi, Computerizing Musician, Obama of Fuji, Erin l’omo! When Pasuma released his first known album “Recognition” in 1993, many critics thought he was another mediocre Fuji boy who would soon disappear into nothingness. They definitely had a point. From the 1970s through the 1990s, hundreds of Fuji artists surfaced and vanished without any imprint. Many couldn’t even achieve the first prerequisite for stardom—claim a space in their neighborhood—not to talk of conquering their city, Nigeria, and the worldwide Fuji diaspora. But Pasuma proved his critics wrong. Unlike Obesere who became an instant star with his first major album “Introduction” in 1991, it took Pasuma his third album “Orobokibo” (1995) to break through the glass ceiling of popular culture. Orobokibo epitomizes the third generation of Fuji—the asakasa oral art of the 1990s—racy registers, unapologetic sexualization of the body, commodification of sex, and global Africanity.

Knowledge is ubiquitous—it is everywhere and in everything. People, especially highly educated Nigerians, who think Fuji, unlike Afrobeat, lacks ideology have a biased conception of knowledge. Fuji has continued to be viewed as the music of low class people, despite gaining significant fan base among academics since the opening of the 21st century. Fuji has not claimed its own space in formal African knowledge production, not because it is ideologically watery, but because, until very recently, it didn't have its own intellectual warriors—that is scholars capable of producing well-researched books and articles on it. For me, writing a book on Fuji goes beyond knowledge production—it is an activist project.

One doesn’t need to look far for hardcore knowledge in Fuji. In April 2007, Pasuma played in Napoli (Italy) for the first time and released a live record, rightly titled “Napoli Like Lagos.” Not only did he lend his voice to the prevailing narrative of the ubiquity of Lagos within the context of parallel global urbanity—that is drawing similarities between global cities or recreating African cities elsewhere—he strategically placed Nigerians at the center of a global black consciousness in Italy. Fuji has a place in theories of global African consciousness, only if scholars can de-eliticize knowledge. Yet, Yoruba language competence is not enough to harness the dense trove of knowledge in Fuji. One must first rethink what constitutes knowledge, art, and authenticity from the perspective of Fuji culture.

Nonetheless, “Napoli Like Lagos” is spectacular, not just because of its affirmation of Lagos diasporic authenticity, but in its originality as a piece of fine Fuji aided by good recording technology. Please enjoy “Napoli Like Lagos,” with a good earbud or bass speaker, and thank the sound engineer, later! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgpTcypoOcg>

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

THE ELEPHANT MUSICIAN

Alh. (Chief)

**WASIU ALABI
PASUMA**

The Fuji Legend of Africa

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