

The Fuji Documentary to Premiere at Barryfest, February 2024 by Saheed Aderinto (Posted on Facebook on August 15, 2023)

I'm scheduled to release the first episode of The Fuji Documentary in February 2024. Titled, "Mr. Fuji: Barry Wonder," the first episode tells the story of Fuji creator, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister. It will premiere at BarryFest, the biennial celebration of his legacy, in February 2024 in Ibadan and at iRepresent International Documentary Film Festival in Lagos, the following month. It will then be screened at the University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos. After these initial premieres, there will be free screenings across local communities, in Ibadan and Lagos, which provided the fertile ground for Fuji to grow. Finally, it will go on YouTube and be made accessible to all.

The Fuji Documentary is not a commercial project. Hence, all the premieres and screenings, including on YouTube, will be free of charge. This research documentary, funded through the Florida state funds and my Dan David prize money, is part of my primary duty as a professor at Florida International University. The time I spent producing it includes my official salary hours as a state employee. So, I cannot commercialize it. It must be free, and it will be free!

Beyond these reasons for making the documentary free, decoloniality and access to knowledge are also very crucial. Producing a 10-episode documentary on Fuji is artistically disruptive and epistemically liberating. There are at least 12 documentaries on Afrobeat, Nigerian Hip Hop, and Fela, but none on Fuji and its artists. American and European cameras have been capturing Juju since the late 1970s or earlier but left Fuji out.

We know the reasons for this unpardonable neglect. One is that because, until very recently, Fuji lacked its own dedicated intellectual warriors, its representation in the central realm of global African knowledge production has been limited. Documentary producers consider the market and their own musical preferences to determine which music to work on. They focus on what people "would like to see" not on what people "must see."

The story of Fuji is too beautiful to be neglected or told only in an academic book, not merely because music generally has an emotive public sensitivity, but also because it's relatable. The point here goes beyond the limited circulation of academic works, as a good reason to produce a documentary, to include the question of who owns the story and deserves to enjoy any knowledge produced from or about it, first.

My 84-year-old father saw the first ten minutes of the documentary preview in July. He recognized a few faces and began to engage me—even with his ailing body and voice. This is exactly what I intend to achieve with The Fuji Documentary—using hard-core research to narrate a historical event that "regular" people would engage in their own way and in their own terms. This is the first time my father would engage me about my own work. Isola, "your job is done,"—I assured myself!

When I started shooting the Fuji documentary in May 2021, a year after the book project began, I set out to produce a filmic knowledge that doesn't lose sight of the visualities and aesthetics of a "conventional" music documentary. Essentially, a digital public history that is accessible, yet artistically sophisticated and epistemically revolting. I wanted to produce a "history in motion" that would have a commercial value but would not be commercialized. I think that something doesn't have to appear amateurish, simply because it's not commercialized.

To all the oversabi film critics who cannot make a simple Tik Tok video---if you write bad reviews about my documentary in February, two fighting ma sele. Olopa ma ko everybody. The first episode of the Fuji Documentary, "Mr. Fuji: Barry Wonder," was shot at the following locations:

Ibadan

The Cultural Center
The Tunde Odunlade Art Gallery
The J.F.Ade Ajayi Library
The Nigerian Tribune Library
Radio Nigeria
Obafemi Awolowo (Liberty) Stadium
Mapo Hall
National Archives
Oyo State House of Assembly
Department of Music Technology, The Polytechnic Ibadan
Wole Soyinka Art Theatre, University of Ibadan
The Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan
The Zoological Garden, University of Ibadan
Department of Music, University of Ibadan
The Botanical Garden, University of Ibadan
Imramat Lounge, Elebu
Strings Studio, Akobo
Oludasile Fuji Studio, Samanda
Cocoa Bean Café, Bodija
Sheik Niyass Kaolack Mosque, Ona Ara

Lagos

Fuji Chamber, Isolo
Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos
Museum of National History, University of Lagos
RemmyChanter Asatainment, Isolo
Sinatra Lounge, Ikeja
Salawa Abeni Booking Office, Ikeja

United States

Philadelphia Marriot Hotel, Philadelphia
Florida International University, Miami
Sandrell Rivers Theater, Miami
And private homes, events, and parties across southwestern Nigeria
Editing and Postproduction
Editor: Aderibigbe Abiola Provost, Rare Edge Media, Bodija, Ibadan
Consultant: Adeleye Fabusoro, CEO, Rare Edge Media, Bodija, Ibadan