

SHORT ARTICLE

DIAMOND PLATNUMZ DOES NOT NEED TO LIVE IN MICHAEL JACKSON'S SHADOW

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INTRODUCTION

Let me first declare my interest that I am a fan of the popular musician of the new generation, Nassib Abdul, who has mostly branded himself as Diamond Platnumz. On top of that, I admire the talent of Michael Jackson, who is known by another name of The Wacko Jacko. Diamond Platnumz is a popular musician not only in Tanzania but also in East Africa and Africa in general. He is one of the few young generation musicians who boast of their music and performances in Tanzania that is well-branded as 'Bongo Fleva'. He is an icon of Tanzanian music that has penetrated the global music market.

Moreover, Diamond is by himself a music industry that has employed many other youth. He has created employment for dancers, video queens, music studio workers, and those who manage the Wasafi Classic Baby (WCB) label. He has also employed youth and other Tanzanians through his ownership of some media companies including Wasafi Radio and Wasafi Television. In January 2020, Diamond Platnumz was among the invited musicians who entertained the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Awards for 2019. This was the second time he was participating in events organised by CAF. The first time occurred in Guinea when he performed during the official launching of the 2017 AFCON (African Nations Championship) tournament. That day, Diamond Platnumz made Tanzanians proud for his exemplary representation of the country, Tanzania. He represented Tanzanian musicians and the youth and the fans who treat him as their role model in the arts and in general life.

SHAPING THE IDENTITY

He entertained during CAF 2020 celebrations, when the Best African Footballer award was scooped by Senegalese Sadio Mane (who was a runner-up during AFCON 2019), and plays for Liverpool in the United Kingdom. During those celebrations, it was obvious that Diamond had imitated everything that have to do with the late Michael Jackson including his manner

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of dress, dance style and even the frills that Michael Jackson demonstrated on stage. People were astonished by the design of the clothes laced with gold and the dancing style, both of which were all replicated from the fallen Michael Jackson. I was personally baffled by that style because he was performing on the international dancing floor whose fans expected at the very least to see his own musical identity.

In any artistic performance, an artist has to demonstrate his/her identity. The big fans of an art work identify a kind of artistic work by focusing on the identity of that art or music. For example, it is easy to recognise the art works of Tatu Nane, Wanne Star, Gwamaka Kaihula (King Crazy GK), AY from Tanzania, Sauti Soul (Kenya) or Mafikizolo, LAX, and Mandoza from South Africa.

When a music fan looks at the video clip or listens to a music sound of musicians such as King GK, with his peculiar style of singing and rhyming you easily recognises the singer. For instance, in his songs, '*Ama Zangu Ama Zao, Komaa Nao, and Itikadi*' you easily realise that King GK who was the band leader of the East Coast Team had developed his own music identity to the fans. He also used to don military garments to show that he is a brave, courageous, and a strong leader; and he is an iconic figure in East Coast Team. Likewise, if you watch the dancing style of Mafikizolo you easily recognise their identity in music. The same applies to musicians such as Saida Karoli and others who have developed their unique identities and music niche.

THE VALUE OF IDENTIFICATION

The experts in creative and performing arts explain that you need a unique identity to brand your artistic works. I am a journalist, senior editor, political and good governance analyst, and I also do sports and entertainment analysis. I am taught that my writing style will always differentiate me from others. Whenever I write I want to see my readers to recognise my identity through my writing style. My writing style is unique. Likewise, when you read the works of other seasoned journalists and senior editors such as Ezekiel Kamwaga or Sid Lowe it is easy to recognise their works. The writings of Sid Lowe cannot be similar to those of Ezekiel Kamwaga because these two have unique identities in their respective works. It is sometimes easy to know their works even without reading the by-lines. The same applies to radio and TV presenters: They establish their own identities. The styles that Zuhura Yunus and Salim Kikeke (both from BBC Swahili Service) use when hosting programmes are different and each attracts viewers because of his or her uniqueness in news broadcasting.

Diamond Platnumz can also be attracted by other good works of his fellow musicians. It is an acceptable and respected phenomenon. But it is a bit

strange for a popular and famous musician such as Diamond to imitate the fashion and dancing style of Michael Jackson; he is jeopardising his music career. Diamond has to establish his own music identity that will attract all fans of music. Any musician has to brand his music and by doing so, he or she adds value to the work. What Diamond performs or possesses should not be copied by another artists. Diamond should create his own identity based on his talent or innovation that will uniquely brand him. I don't want to believe that Diamond cannot design his own fashion or add some artistic flair to his dancing styles. I don't want to believe that Diamond cannot come up with innovative ways to re-brand his music to attract more fans; it is useless to copy everything from Michael Jackson because what he did was already an identity that branded Michael Jackson and not Diamond. He has to come up with his own music brand.

Observers and fans of artists would want to see something unique. They want to be attracted by the novelty in the works of artists and the artist should transform himself/herself; there should a frequent metamorphosis of the artists so as to maintain his identity. Michael Jackson was a pop star with a fans base of colossal proportion and his image cannot be equated to Diamond. The Wacko Jacko is well known globally. He was a global celebrity and was known by his dressing and dancing styles; and all these were because of his innovativeness and he was always determined to add value to his music that was known globally. The Wacko Jacko was talented pop star but his dressing styles decorated his music and he was a leading icon of pop music. Today, when we witness Diamond copying Michael Jackson's identity we fail to understand him because he is spoiling his image as a musician and as a human being he has to be innovative by coming up with his own unique identity in music and in dressing.

REPRESENTING OTHERS

Let me conclude by saying that it is important for Diamond and his fellow musicians to understand that their identities are instrumental in the promotion of their works in the world of performing arts. It is unhealthy to find a musician or artist plagiarising or copying someone's intellectual property without permission because innovation is an integral part of intellectual rights. On the one hand, copying Michael Jackson might seem to be a normal thing; on the other hand, it reveals a weakness on the part of a musician failing to create his/her own identity that could brand him/her before the fans.