

# ANALYSIS OF CREATIVE COMPONENTS IN SELECTED SONGS OF DON JAZZY

**Micheal Adeleke Bakare, Ph.D.**

ORCID iD: 0009-0002-5686-4353

## **Abstract**

Creativity is the essence of musical arts, it allows artistes to explore new horizons, express unique identities, and shape cultural narratives. Nigerian hip-hop, with its distinctive blend of indigenous rhythms, lyrics, and innovative vocal techniques, exemplifies a creative force that has captivated audiences worldwide. This paper analyses essential musical components that demonstrate originality in Don Jazzy's music and in addition considers their influence on musical arts. The analyses of musical concepts were presented in staff notation. Drawing on stylistic theory, this article provides an analysis of five songs produced by the artiste. The study identifies particular components in regard to the usage of melody, rhythm, harmony, and structure of his music production through interpretative lens. The findings also shed light on the creative brilliance and artistic ingenuity exhibited in Don Jazzy's songs, providing insights into factors that contributed to his success as a music producer.

**Keywords:** Creativity, Musical arts, Hip-hop, Vocal, Ingenuity, and Music.

## **Introduction**

Within the ambit of musical arts education, fostering creativity is a vital aspect of nurturing students' artistic abilities and encouraging their unique perspectives. One genre that has gained significant prominence in recent years is Nigeria hip-hop, which has not only captivated audiences with its infectious beats but also showcased a rich tapestry of creative expressions through sound ingenuity. Though American hip hop provides Naija hip hop with its form, the fact that this music genre has been able to fuse into itself the qualities of other precursor popular music genres such as West African High Life, Fela Anikulapo Kuti's Afro Beats, Fuji, Apala, Juju, and many other indigenous traditional music brands has made it a typical hybrid art form (Shonekan, 2012).

Adedeji (2017) stressed that the sound connected to Nigerian hip-hop music that can be observed unaided is the incorporation of more African idioms and less Western idioms. Alim (2009) notes that the influence of urban exposure on the music of Africa, which includes the influence of Western technology,

mass communication media, and recorded music from other parts of the world regularly played on tape recorders of various types in Africa contributed to the musical evolutions and developments in Africa. Nigerian Hip-hop is denotatively referred to as a type of modern dance music with a new sound and a steady beat played on electronic instruments Oikilome (2001). Adesokan (1995), observed that Nigerian hip-hop consists of composed and arranged songs that are promoted, and marketed in Nigeria for Nigerians. The composition of Nigerian hip-hop songs involves the careful use of lexis (the total of words or vocabulary in a language) which appropriately expresses the minds of hip-hop singers.

With the release of Ronnie Ekundayo's rap album *The Way I Feel* (1981), the Nigerian music scene embraced the hip-hop music. However, the genre did not gain widespread popularity until the 1990s and early 2000s, when it underwent a series of changes that gave it the new name of "Afro-hip hop" and gave it an original sound by appropriating existing musical forms. This evolution was started by the first generation hip hop artistes like The Remedies (a trio of Tony Tetuilla, Eedris Abdulkareem, and Eddie Montana), Baba Dee, Lord of Ajasa, Sound Sultan, Ruggedman, and 9ice among others who continue till date to rebrand the Nigerian variant of Hip hop for global presence and recognition. Although scholarly investigation into the literary and sociological aspects of Nigerian popular music has been prevalent, little focus has been placed on its artistic aspects. Thus, to explore Don Jazzy's work and emphasize his musical accomplishments throughout the years, the paper employs a stylistic approach to examine stylistic choices that contributed to the phenomenon of his music.

### **Methodology**

This paper utilizes a stylistic research approach to advance its discourse, relying solely on the analyses of five songs produced by Don Jazzy: *Pop Something*, *Why Me*, *Dorobucci*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Bloody Samaritan* to identify melodic construction, rhythmic components, harmony, and structure of his music production through an interpretative lens. In addition to the understanding of current and related literature from a variety of bibliographic sources, library, and the internet were also utilised for accessible and related resources on the study of creative components in Don Jazzy's music productions. These gave background knowledge on the compositional and trends in Don Jazzy's music.

### **Don Jazzy: Biographical Information and Artistic Development**

In 1982, Michael Collins Ajere professionally known as Don Jazzy was born in

Umuahia to Collins and Annabel Ajere, both indigenes of Isoko in Delta State. Ajereh's family moved to [Ajegunle, Lagos](#) in the early 90s' where Don Jazzy was raised. Don Jazzy attended the Federal Government College, Lagos, and proceeded to study business management at the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. He started playing drums and singing at the age of 4 years and his interest in music increased as he learned the keyboard and other percussive instruments at his place of worship, the Cherubim and Seraphim church Aladura.

In 2000, Don Jazzy was invited to perform for a local church in London, after which he was employed at [McDonald's](#) as a security guard in London. He returned to Nigeria and founded the defunct Mo'Hits Records with D'Banj in 2004. By 2006, he successfully produced three albums; No Long Thing, Funk You Up, and Curriculum Vitae. Don Jazzy grew in fame and developed a catchy phrase before the intro of every song he produced: 'Don Jazzy again'. Mo' Hits was made up of Don Jazzy, D'Banj, Dr. SID, Wande Coal, and D'Prince. The record label in the early 2000s was successful and also produced singles for other label mates and co-produced Wande Coal's Mushin 2 Mo'Hits album which was one of Nigeria's best albums at that time.

Don Jazzy also provided background vocals for artistes he produced, some of which include vocals for Kanye West's song 'Lift Off' with Beyonce on 'Watch The Throne' album, for D'Banj, Sauce Kid, Dr. SID, Ikechukwu, Jay Z, and D'Prince. Don Jazzy and D'Banj in 2012 abandoned their music label Mo'Hits due to irreconcilable artistic differences. This led to the birth of a new music label in May same year. He birthed the new and functional MAVIN RECORDS and signed new artists including Tiwa Savage, and Reekado Banks. Korede Bello, D'Ija, Iyanya, along with the old artistes from the defunct Mo'Hits (Wande Coal, D'Prince, and Dr.SID).

His success is characterised by an ability to blend various genres, integrate traditional and modern sounds, and foster collaborations with emerging artists. As an artist and entrepreneur, Don Jazzy has garnered recognition as the founder and CEO of Mavin Records, a prominent Nigerian record label. Apart from the recognition as an award-winning music producer, Don Jazzy recorded impressive international collaborations and signed several Nigerian artists such as Rema, Ayra Starr, and Johnny Drille among others. There continue to be endless collaboration requests from all over the world by artistes who are fascinated by his signed protégées vocal versatility, effortless delivery, and pseudo-mixed style.

### **Stylistic Features in Don Jazzy's Music Production**

Like other popular music genres in Nigeria, Don Jazzy's music production is a

confluence of both foreign and local styles. The foreign styles identified in the works are hip hop, Rhythm and Blues, Dance Hall, reggae, and Hindustani music fusion. Stylistic Analysis of any work of art including music production should encompass the consideration of the work being studied. Five of his songs were selected for analysis. As a music producer and songwriter, Don Jazzy is known for creating songs that feature engaging melodies and harmonies.

### Melody



Figure 1: An excerpt of the introduction of 'Pop Something'

An overview of the productions' melodic material is given in this section. In the majority of his works, Don Jazzy uses a range no higher than an octave; for extemporizations; for instance, the male chest voice registers while Pop Something serves as a prime illustration of this. This song's foundations are a fusion of Western hip-hop and African musical styles. The song's chorus incorporates both an indigenous call-and-response style and a strophic kind of Western hip-hop, all in 4/4 time. The music's melodic interval is defined by a stepwise movement that typically does not go beyond a sixth, followed by an erratic chorus portion. According to Oikelome (2001), descending intervals, particularly intervals of seconds and thirds, are substantially more common than ascending ones in falling direction tunes as a whole. Even though it happens less frequently, the bigger interval happens more frequently in ascending motion than in descending motion. Examples of these are seen in a section of the music excerpt



Figure 2: An excerpt of the melodic contour





### Harmony

The primary and secondary-dominant progressions are the only ones employed in Don Jazzy productions to resolve the harmonic language around diatonic harmony. His works employ the use of a number of harmonic approaches, such as triadic harmony, polarity, and parallel harmony in two parts. The application of parallel harmony in triadic parts is seen in an excerpt taken from “Pop Something” as shown in the example below:

In Doro Bucci, two-part is observed and it is sparsely distributed in the music

The image shows a piano accompaniment for the song "Pop Something". It consists of two staves of music. The first staff is labeled "Piano" and contains the lyrics: "When we are li... we dey pop... when... pop... we dey pop". The second staff continues the accompaniment with lyrics: "when... pop... we dey pop... when... pop...". The music features a mix of chords and melodic lines, with some notes held across measures.

Figure 7: Excerpt of the harmony in Pop Something

The image shows a duet vocal arrangement for the song "Doro Bucci". It features two vocal staves. The first staff is labeled "Voice" and contains the lyrics: "I'm bigger... can you be my man for one... My love is here to stay... won't go a way... I". The second staff is also labeled "Voice" and contains the lyrics: "promise to... love you e-ve-r- day... Oh no Cherie... no breaking me... cu l'". The music is written in a style that suggests a duet, with overlapping vocal lines.

Figure 8: Excerpt of duet voicing from Doro Bucci

which is mainly an expression of a solo and duet performer. Overlapping harmony is evident in the music for example in the extract fig 8

The frequent usage of vocal ingenuity is a noteworthy aspect of Afro-beat harmony. My Love provides one as an example. This song's structure is mid-tempo with calypso, reggae, hip-hop, and dancehall influences. The music's harmonic progression incorporates the technique of harmonizing a melody in the second, third, and octaves. The music is interlaced with solos that take the lead and responses in two- and three-part harmony that come in between. From the beginning of bar 8 through the first beat of bar 14, the call, which also acts as the verse, kept a medium range



Figure 9: Excerpt of the chorus section

### Form/Structure

The productions by Don Jazzy is somewhat short in duration. Furthermore, most of his arrangements are in the verse-chorus form. Irregular patterns of verses and choruses occur in some of his works like Godwin which provides examples of this practice. After proceeding twice through a predictable verse-prehook-chorus sequence, the song continues with two more verse-prehook sections without the chorus. Another recurring element in the production of Don Jazzy is the use of repetition to reinforce the lyrics' statement and establish the melody in the listener's mind. The song below Pop Something containing this type of chorus, demonstrates this particular preference for short statements. The singer also employs repeated hook statements by backing voices, to which the lead voice adds further melodic and lyric ideas. Kokomaster and Godwin involve a repeated hook followed by further melodic development. Backing vocals are also regularly used to create call-response patterns that play an important role in black pop crossover songs



Figure 10: Excerpt from the structure

### **Don Jazzy's Music Philosophy and Musical Arts**

According to Adedeji (2022), he opines that approaching Nigerian musical arts requires that we problematise the complexities of the representations of dominant and/or subordinate philosophies and contexts of participation, adaptation, appropriation, (re)signification, pedagogy and reception within a vastly heterogeneous geographical entity and frontiers. Don Jazzy's music philosophy is rooted in a combination of creativity, innovation, and the promotion of African musical identity. His approach to Musical Arts encompasses several key principles that have shaped his work as a producer, artist, and entrepreneur.

**Diverse Musical Influences:** Don Jazzy draws inspiration from a wide range of musical genres, both local and international. His ability to seamlessly blend these influences into his music reflects his belief in the power of musical diversity. This philosophy encourages musicians and students alike to explore various styles and incorporate them into their creative expressions.

**Cultural Pride and Representation:** Don Jazzy's music philosophy is deeply intertwined with his pride in Nigerian and African culture. He often infuses his productions with elements of traditional Nigerian music, language, and themes. By showcasing the richness of African culture through music, he emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage in the face of globalization. This corroborates the claim by Adeniyi (2020) that self-expression within hip-hop is closely tied to the concept of locality and a representation of one's own geographical area or place.

**Innovation and Experimentation:** One of Don Jazzy's defining characteristics is his willingness to experiment with sound and production techniques. He continuously seeks out new sounds, instruments, and technology to create fresh and captivating music. This philosophy encourages musicians to step outside their comfort zones, embrace innovation, and push the boundaries of their creativity.

**Collaboration and Mentorship:** Don Jazzy's belief in the power of collaboration is evident in his work with emerging artists. He has played a significant role in nurturing young talents and providing them with opportunities to shine. This philosophy highlights the importance of mentorship and cooperation in the development of Musical Arts skills.

**Audience Engagement:** Don Jazzy's engagement with his audience through social media and digital platforms is a testament to his understanding of the modern music industry. He values direct interaction with fans and

recognizes the impact of technology on music distribution and promotion. This philosophy underscores the need for musicians to connect with their audience in meaningful ways beyond just their music.

**Adaptation to Trends:** While staying true to his musical identity, Don Jazzy also acknowledges the importance of adapting to changing musical trends. He incorporates contemporary elements into his productions while maintaining his unique style. This philosophy reflects the need for artists to remain relevant while evolving their artistic expression.

**Perseverance and Resilience:** Don Jazzy's journey in the music industry has been marked by challenges and successes. His resilience and determination to overcome obstacles showcase his commitment to his craft. This philosophy encourages aspiring musicians to persevere in the face of adversity and work diligently to achieve their goals.

### **Production Techniques Employed By Don Jazzy**

According to Don Jazzy (2022), his production techniques employed are in tandem with his knowledge of sound engineering, mixing, and mastering, which play a vital role in shaping the overall sound and quality of his music. Here are the key roles of each technique:

#### **1. Sound Engineering**

**Recording:**

Don Jazzy's sound engineering skills involve capturing high-quality audio during the recording process. This includes ensuring proper microphone placement, selecting appropriate recording equipment, capturing clean and balanced sound from each instrument, and capturing clean and balanced sound from each instrument or vocal.

- **Editing:** Don Jazzy pays attention to detail in editing recorded tracks, removing any unwanted noises or imperfections. This process involves trimming, aligning, and adjusting individual audio segments for optimal clarity and coherence.

**Signal Processing:**

Using a range of audio effects and processors, Don Jazzy enhances recorded tracks to achieve desired sonic characteristics. Techniques like equalization, compression, and reverb are applied to shape and balance the tonal qualities, dynamics, and spatial representation of the sound.

## 2. **Mixing**

**Balancing the Mix:** Don Jazzy carefully blends individual tracks of various instruments and vocals to create a harmonious blend. Through adjusting volume levels, panning, and stereo imaging, he ensures that each element sits well within the mix, allowing for a cohesive and balanced sound.

**Equalization and Frequency Manipulation:** By utilizing equalization techniques, Don Jazzy controls the frequency content of each track, enhancing or reducing specific frequencies to create tonal clarity and separation between elements.

**Dynamics Processing:** Don Jazzy uses dynamic processors such as compressors and limiters to control the dynamic range of each track, ensuring that certain elements stand out while maintaining a consistent overall volume level.

**Spatial Effects:** Employing techniques like reverb, delay, and spatial imaging, Don Jazzy adds depth, width, and ambiance to the mix, providing a sense of space and enhancing the overall listening experience.

## 3. **Mastering**

**Finalizing the Mix:** Don Jazzy's mastering process involves making the final adjustments to the overall mix. This includes fine-tuning the frequency balance, dynamic range, stereo image, and overall loudness to ensure that the song translates well across different audio systems and maintains a cohesive sound.

**Sequencing:** When working on an album or compilation, Don Jazzy arranges the songs in a logical and coherent order, taking into account factors such as tempo, key, and overall mood to create a smooth transition between tracks

**Loudness Optimization:** Don Jazzy employs loudness optimization techniques to ensure that the mastered tracks have a consistent volume level compared to other professional recordings, while still retaining dynamics and clarity of the mix.

Overall, Don Jazzy's proficiency in sound engineering, mixing, and mastering enables him to translate his creative vision into compelling and sonically pleasing music, enhancing the overall impact and success of his productions.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of Don Jazzy's musical works demonstrates that several Western and African elements were integrated in his music productions. The

producer and songwriter showed beyond doubt that he could achieve substantial pop-chart success by adapting the musical language of 'Naija hip' to create the 'pop' in it. The article also supports the idea that Don Jazzy is a hip-hop icon whose music undoubtedly represents a major breakthrough for musicians in Nigeria. This is borne from the fact that he writes musical materials for mainstream audience, like his European counterparts. His music is allied with sweet melodies and positive lyrics. His music make use of devices such as simile, metaphor, paradoxical statements to create distinctive and evocative images thus making him one of the most sought after producer in Nigeria.

Don Jazzy's creative music production process highlights his contributions to the music industry and offers valuable lessons for musical arts education. His genre fusion, cultural representation, innovative production techniques, collaboration, and digital marketing skills demonstrate how educators can nurture creativity, embrace diversity, and prepare students for successful careers in music. Aspiring music students can draw inspiration from Don Jazzy's musical journey and use his work as a pivotal to have a ground breaking musical endeavors. Incorporating Don Jazzy's music philosophy into Musical Arts education can have several benefits. It encourages students to embrace diversity, experiment with new ideas, respect their cultural heritage, collaborate with peers, and adapt to changing industry landscapes. By studying Don Jazzy's approach, educators can inspire the next generation of musicians to approach their craft with a holistic and forward-thinking mindset, ultimately contributing to the growth and evolution of Musical Arts on a broader scale.

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### **Production Discography of Don Jazzy**

- No Long Thing 2015 – D'banj  
Rundown Funk You Up 2006 – D'banj  
The Entertainer 2008 – D'banj  
Curriculum Vitae 2007 – Mo Hits All Stars  
Mushin 2 Mohits 2008 – Wande Coal  
Turning Point 2010 – Dr. Sid  
Solar Plexus 2012 – Marvin Records  
Once Upon a Time 2013 – Tiwa Savage  
Red 2015 – Tiwa Savage  
Beloved 2017 – Korede Bello  
Red 2015 – Tiwa Savage  
Beloved 2017 – Korede Bello

### **Awards and Recognitions of Don Jazzy**

- Nigerian Music Award 2006 – Producer of the Year  
Nigerian Entertainment Awards 2007 – Music Producer of the Year  
The Headies 2011 – Producer of the Year  
The Headies 2014 – Producer of the Year  
City People Entertainment Awards 2015 – Special Recognition Award  
BET Award 2020

### **Website visited**

- <https://tooxclusive.com/50-greatest-don-jazzys-nigerian-music-production/3/5/2023>  
<https://infoguidenigeria.com/don-jazzys-biography-awards-recognitions/7/6/2023>