

The ideal production

By Benson Idonije

It is now obvious that many producers have set aside the established formats whose essence was well known for engendering the desired professional quality of radio and television programmes. They have resorted to half measures and poorly contrived devices for packaging programmes.

Funny enough, the success of a production is now determined by the volume of audience participation it attracts from telephone calls.

Actually, the successful programme is now the one that is overwhelmingly inundated with telephone receiver. But good enough, there are still a few programmes that one can look up to for rewarding listening and viewing. And these are programmes that have been well researched and planned with production procedures that adhere to the dictates of the relevant formats. One such programme is Kith and Kin broadcast on NTA channel 10.

Many issues have been discussed on Kith and Kin over time, ranging from "bribery and corruption" and "family planning" to "juvenile delinquency" and "child abuse". And each programme has had something new and fresh to say from week to week.

A 'panel' discussion type, the producer has always gone for discussants whose backgrounds are relevant to the topics. She knows that a panel discussion is 'formal' and so she always uses more than two people to execute the topics. More importantly, every programme has come out with a definite aim and objective - those of correcting the ills of society and improving the quality of life. The programme usually highlights problems from discussants and later sets out to ask for solutions.

There are however two minor lapses in the production which do not quite conform with the provisions of the format. The topic of discussion needs to be properly phrased to give it the structure of a statement as opposed to a mere phrase where there is no action verb. This is desirable just so that decisions and resolutions can effectively be taken in conformity with the topic.

On the other hand, there is usually an expert at the tail end of the programme, who acts like a "Mr. know all." In most cases, some of these people are knowledgeable and have spoken authoritatively on issues and subject matter, but this is unnecessary. Their views are personal - as personal as those of members of the panel, and cannot take anything away from the resolutions already taken, based on the views of the various discussants. This is because no one person has all the answers; and no matter how rich and authoritative his experience is he is only seeing the situation from his own individual perspective. And this is unacceptable because by definition, a discussion is "an examination of an issue by two or more persons by way of argument."

However, the moderator of "Kith and Kin" has proved that she is a paragon of the broadcasting virtues needed for controlling a discussion programme. She is a critical and

sympathetic listener and so is able to steer the discussion logically, progressively. She has a readiness with words and ideas, a reality which manifests itself in display of her deep knowledge of research. As for eloquence, she appears to have view on every point, and so is able to say exactly what she means to say without mincing words. In addition, she is always conscious of the duration of the programme and so tries to avoid overrunning by apportioning time to every participant whose contribution is promptly followed by brilliant paraphrases and summaries that help to establish the continuity of this fast-moving programme. "Kith and Kin" is one of the best locally produced programmes on Nigerian television.

Another programme which has attained a high standard of presentation and production recently is Time na money broadcast on Ray Power 100FM on Monday mornings and hosted by Akin Akindele, a broadcaster who is maturing in the profession. And this is because he is receptive to criticism and new ideas; and he is willing to learn.

As an individual, Akin Akindele has matured, and his programme is waxing stronger with time because he now has quite a good stock of jokes and funny stories to sustain it from week to week. Actually he has become one of the most outstanding comedians around - a force to be reckoned with.

Listening to Open House Party, that 'variety and light entertainment' programme on Ray Power 100FM that is crying out loud for professional production, it is obvious that it is perhaps his active involvement and participation that is sustaining it.

The ideal programme is the one that offers the viewer or listener something positively concrete that he can hold on to long after broadcast - in terms of education, information and entertainment. And to achieve this objective, the programme should be thoroughly researched, written with all simplicity and clarity and eventually communicates with utmost comprehensibility, with the basic requirements of the format in mind. Otherwise how was it possible for a phone call from the country to get through to Netherland; when even a call from a house to another house in same neighborhood is almost unthinkable. And this particular call connected just at the very first trial.

"Is democracy installed now? Because that's the only thing that can bring sanity and efficiency of social services to that your country."

"Oh Emeka. It is now my country. No longer your own country of origin. Aren't you going to return have someday."

"Well, maybe in the future when you have sorted yourself out, I can't live in that land, not until those tough guys leave the place to the people's choice."

"But you'll soon finish your Doctorate degree and we are all looking forward to your returning to contribute..."

"Please, Please! stop that dirty joke. I shall return to African. But I have two places on my mind, Ghana, by the way."

"That's it. You see what I am saying. That's a land meant for progressive people. It has risen through its turbulent past and is now climbing. But your country is just rolling on one spot..."

Emeka raps on, pumelling the country which he once held dear and promised to serve. As a student of sociology at the University of Ibadan, he had plans to work in a government ministry because like he always said "I want to contribute to the shaping of policies for the development of the country. But that was before the coming of disillusionment and dark melodies occasioned by the coming of SAP.

His father had served the country for 32 years in the health ministry. He retired in 1988 and collapsed after hours on a queue to select his passion dues. He never lived again. Emeka himself had waited 1986 through 1991 with no work except infrequent contracts here and there.

He left the country early 1992, the very night his mother died of complication that resulted from a light outage while her troublesome appendicitis was being removed. First, Emeka migrated to no where and nobody in particular in the Republic of Benin. And from there he "made it to light from the darkness at home" as he wrote in his last letter.

Dejo has drifted so long in his reminiscences of his good friend that he does not notice a young man waiting patiently for him to vacate the telephone booth. He is shocked though. The guy just stands there pretending to be reading something on the wall. "What manner of people. He couldn't even be a Lagosian. Just scream at the top of your voice: Old boy, I beg commot dat place if you don finis!" or Look, get out of that booth if you've finished."