

True home of distinction

By Benson Idonije

The fact that there is now a good number of television channels in Lagos area, is a gratifying and a welcome development for the viewer who now has a good variety to choose from depending on where his interest lies. On the other hand, this situation is giving the stations sleepless nights as they try to grapple with and meet the challenges which it poses in terms of competition. This element is beginning to sanitise the industry, bringing with it improved standards and qualitative programmes, as exhibited by NTA Channel 7 which now has perhaps the greatest audience pull on Sunday afternoons with a programme Mix, an extensive stretch which is an exciting delight to watch, and a rewarding experience to remember.

Viewing starts from half past one with perhaps the greatest and most popular TV documentary in recent times. Titled "Nkan mbe", "strange things are happening," the programme sets out every week, to unravel some of the mysteries of this world based on real life situations.

The language is that of elegant prose with proverbial and idiomatic expressions in Yoruba that are deep and loaded with enough meaning to vividly tell the stories.

Presented by Kola Olawuyi, a fine broadcaster who is also the producer, the programme helps to expose spiritual wickedness as it torments people and sends them to their untimely death; and from the episodes the viewer learns lessons about life and living. All this is well documented with accounts that bring in oral and physical evidence to tell the various stories objectively in a package that is truly a creative treatment of actuality.

The language of the documentary may not give non Yoruba speakers the opportunity to understand the episodes, but he would enjoy them all the same through translation by an interpreter.

On Sunday, 19th January for instance, the programme started as usual with a thematic and relevant signature tune that is usually inviting. On the way to Sagamu, the scene of the week's assignment, the crew caught up with, and recorded a ghastly accident involving a trailer and a bus with dead bodies being removed from the wreckage. According to the producer, no media house ever reported the event.

The main object of the crew's mission had its focus on a rich man who started as a palm wine tapper and because fortune smiled on him, graduated into big business, built houses, bought vehicles and generally came into wealth and prosperity. He loved women, and ended up with eight wives, an involvement which was the beginning of his undoing.

For the past four years, he has been bed-ridden with an ailment that has defied orthodox medication, while the root cause has been traced to some of his wives, who have confessed to witchcraft and accepted responsibility.

The story continues in subsequent episodes, but in the meantime, our man is lying helpless, lean, gaunt, critically ill and a shadow of his former self.

Another Sunday viewing delight on this channel is "Lagbo Video which literally means. "In the garden of videos." Presented by a knowledgeable theatre practitioner himself, he invites various actors, actresses and producers whose films are popular for the review of their roles and productions. More importantly, fans are usually happy to chat with their idols in actual life, totally divorced from acting, and the different roles they have been seen to play in videos. It is a very interesting programme considering the heavy traffic of telephone calls, which is also a demonstration of the popularity and viability of the video industry in Nigeria.

The programme was supposed to be a kind of memorial for the late Ade Love, and Mr. Mofe-Damijo, President of the National Association of Theatre Practitioners of Nigeria on hand.

He paid glowing tributes to the late film maker, saying that the success of today's groundwork that Ade Love, Ogunde, Ojo Ladipo as pioneers established, and that the ready audience that the industry is enjoying today was built by them.

The interview however, went into Ade Love's preference and advocacy for celluloid, but the interviewer was so carried away that he did not allow Mofe Damijo to explain. He could not help betraying his knowledge of the subject and so they both were competing to provide the answers. Otherwise, it was a good programme, one of the attractions that one enjoys on Channels 7's Sunday afternoon showcase, the review of which will be concluded next week.

Firstly, Egunyinka recorded on video Okiki's participation in various rituals and sends to his wife in America to discredit him as uncivilised. As it turns out, the wife and her friend find the rituals colourful, interesting, and appealing and sell it to a Tee-Vee station in America for a huge sum.

Unsatisfied and frustrated by the turn of events, Amekunlooye decided to eliminate Okiki but the gods say no and destroy him.

Although, the storyline appears like an excerpt from Ola Rotimi's *Gods Are Not To Blame*, the two-hour movie parades a collection of notable video artistes like, Antar Tunde Laniyan, Rasaq Ajao (Araosan), Hassan Taiwo (Ogogo), Wunmi, Yinka Quadri, Bimpe Adekola (Ireti), Aduke Adeyemo (Mama Ngba Life), Saidi Balogun (as Kabiyesi), Bimbo Oshin, Dagunro, Isiaka Ajao (Poison) among others. The story is well told and features colourful costumes and dances.

Written and directed by Antar Laniyan who told *The Guardian* that the movie "is to refocus attention on cultural and traditional story line and show that education, wealth and status are no barrier to involvement in tradition.

Olgbojo with a cast of 60 is produced by Al-Abrak Film Concepts in collaboration with Dedicart Productions.

Featuring a lot of stunts and special effects, it will debut in the home video market late February.