

Cult Film in Nigeria: An Assessment of the Silent Trend

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Abstract

Cult film has evolved from its tradition of breaking cultural taboos and creating controversy to the subtle art of film appreciation facilitated by devoted and loyal fans. This study assesses the definitions and approaches to viewing cult film particularly the phenomenological approach. The assessment is based on how certain elements of the Western categorisation of cult film by scholars can be applicable in the Nigerian context. The study argues that some Nigerian films have indeed achieved the status of cult film. The study is a desk research, carried out using three online databases: Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost and Science Direct. A noteworthy finding is that many Nigerian films often attain cult status. The study concludes that cult film should no longer be viewed through the lens of traditional definitions and structuring elements but instead, they should be considered as creations in the hands of the audience who have the authority to decide whether or not a film is worthy of cult status. It recommends that researchers and filmmakers need to define the elements of cult film in the Nigerian context to make film classification easier.

Key words: Film, Film Appreciation, Film Genres, Cult Film, Nigeria

Introduction

A cult film is simply a film with a cult following and can be defined based on its content or the reaction of the audience (Haigh, 2010). This implies that cult films are known for their followers which are dedicated and passionate and create a notable subculture that participate in repeated viewings, quoting dialogue and audience participation. This can also take the form of film festivals, audience participation and costume play. There are different approaches to viewing cult cinema, some of which are considered in this

research. The first approach focuses on the views of theorists that view cult cinema as a style or an association with genres (science fiction, horror, and thriller) as Mathijis and Mendik (2008) call it ontological approach, the second deals with fans appreciation, i.e. films that became cult after they were released or films that became cult because of the reaction of fans which was referred to as Phenomenological approach, and the third focuses on Eco (1986) explanation of meta cult- a deliberate attempt by directors/producers to incorporate their references from their favourite movies into their production.

This study assesses the research based evidence that certain films in Nigeria have a cult following. This is because the traditional definitions and classifications of cult film in the West cannot be used for Nigerian films and this leaves a gap in the genre classification of Nigerian movies. As such, the motivation for the study is to establish acceptable criteria or elements for determining cult films in the Nigerian context by analysing some of the universal characteristics of cult film. The study therefore argues that Nigerian films do not follow most of the western classification of cult films but can regardless be categorised as cult films. To achieve this, it is important to examine some definitions and arguments about what a cult film really is and how a few Nigerian films have achieved that status and continue to be seen as cult films even decades after they were produced. Are there Nigerian films that can be classified as cult films? How have these Nigerian films been able to achieve the status of cult films? Lastly, what are some of the criteria for a film to achieve the status of cult film?

To address these questions, the study has examined the definitions of cult film. Next, the different approaches to viewing cult film are contextualised to shed more light on what a cult film is. This is followed by a discussion relating to cult film category to the Nigerian context as a way to argue that

certain films in Nigeria can indeed be classified as cult films. This is followed by a conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual clarification

To start with, Cult film has been defined and explained by different scholars (Eco 1986, Jenkins 2008, Grant 2008, Austin 1981, Hills and Sexton 2015, Hunter 2016, Sexton, 2017). Mathijis and Mendik (2008) have classified cult film into two major perspectives which are “ontological and phenomenological approaches”. Mathijis and Mendik claim that “ontological approaches to cult film are usually essentialist as they try to determine what makes cult cinema a certain type of movie” (p.15). They attempt to describe cult film like a genre or a style of production and most genres which are associated or accumulated together as cult film are horror film, science fiction and fantasy. This means the use of ontological approach by scholars and practitioners of cult cinema see cult cinema as an association that is connected with a style or as the case may be a genre. Theorists that use this kind of approach also do not see cult film based on the popularity it gathers or the fans it creates; rather it is seen as movies which are meant to be hidden from the general public, movies only a selected few should have access to. Such theorists are Potamkin (2008), Grant (2008), Jerslev (2008) and Briggs (2008).

Potamkin (2008:28) describes cult cinema that for a film to be called cult, it does not really need to have a rebellious attitude rather it is the treatment of the movie that matters and how the movie is perceived by the audience. According to him: “the main film cult, however, seeks identity (thereby comfort) with popular taste, and not with the recalcitrant or rebellious element in that taste beginning to make itself felt.”

Grant (2008:77) argues that “the term ‘cult’ tends to be used rather loosely, to describe a variety of films, old and new, that are extremely popular or have a particularly devoted audience and cult films tend to construct a microcosmic community of admirers.” He contends that although it is believed a cult film must have a devoted audience and communal following, this is not actually true. Rather, it can be looked at from the position of transgression and badness; ‘transgression’- means its own style or the style of production employed by the producers that is rather different from normal, and ‘badness’- something horrifying, bloody, something unthinkable which classifies the movie as bad based on use of extreme violence.

Furthermore, Grant (2008) claims that what really makes a movie cult or what they have in common “is their ability to be at once, transgressive and recuperative, in other words, to reclaim that which they seem to violate (p78)”. This means that cult films naturally have the ability to break/violate the law of film genre- like adding extreme blood shedding or killing as the case may be and the same time regaining the ability to go back to their original story or ‘regain that which they seem to violate.’

Grant further sheds more light on cult cinema with the explanation and input of ‘sameness and difference’. The author asserts that “cult movies seemingly have contradictory qualities of sameness and difference. The reason for this is that they are, in fact, at once different and the same, transgressive and recuperative (p.79)”. Grant believes that though different cult films have different styles of portraying their ‘cultness’ but always follow a pattern or have that similarity that can be identified in them.

Furthermore, Jerslev (2008:9) feels cult cinema has lost that part of “the specific sub-cultural meaning traditionally attached to it” (p89). Cult films have lost its cultural incentive i.e. cult films do not normally sell or cult films

are not hyped before they get to the cinemas instead they are done on a low key basically and importantly an underground concept. Cult films were meant to be a 'forbidden fruit', but now cult films are being marketed through previews before going to the market.

However, Jerslev (2008:92) also argues that cult films cannot be seen as a genre rather cult films can only be "brought into existence in so far as one talks of a certain interaction between a text and an audience." This view suggests that cult cinema can only be classified as cult when it is being discussed about among audience. Thus, he suggests further that, "whether a cult film is watched once or several times; whether it addresses its spectators with immense intertextual awareness or whether as a genre variation, it inspires the feeling of *déjà vu*, the contemporary audience partake in a semiotic discourse, a dialogue with a present fictional text, placed in a different way from being presently unpresent (meaning the audience feels they have experienced the film on a personal level). Similarly, the spectators inscribe the characters into this discourse as if they were real persons" (p. 98). This view suggest that in order for a movie to be classified as cult even if it has been seen several times; it must create the feeling of remembrance, the feeling that fans get when they say 'I have seen this before' or 'I have seen this in a movie'.

A different definition has been given by Mathijs and Mendik (2008:11), who define cult film "as a film with an active and lively communal following with highly committed and rebellious in its own appreciation." The definition is backed up with four concepts of explaining cult cinema, which are: Anatomy, Consumption, Political economy and Cultural status. Anatomy describes the film itself containing the features of the film, content, style, format, and generic modes. Anatomy can be broken down into several parts which explain cult film; innovation, badness, transgression, genre, intertextual, loose ends,

nostalgia, and gore. Innovation is an element that beautifies and improves a cult film with the use of special effects and instigation of new techniques. It goes to the extreme and that separates cult film from mainstream movies that carefully inject innovations to avoid upsetting audiences. In other words, innovation is said to be an improvement in which cult films can showcase its vivid demonstration of fighting, bloodsheds and killings with special effects with the camera focusing on the victim receiving the damage, an example (kill Bill Vol.1 2003). Cult films are always considered bad due to the fact that most movies called cult tend to portray poor scripting, poor storyline, poor camera work and poor cinematic achievement which often place them in some kind of opposition to mainstream films.

In other words, badness is often found in cult films due to deliberate poor cinematic work to gain more audiences who just want to watch a movie that is different from other movies. On the other hand, transgression goes beyond cult films being good or bad rather it stays within but they are “off the planet” by disobeying the rules which may include style, moral, and political qualities in a very crude way. This means transgression in cult cinema is the wrongdoing of a movie by inventing new ideas but in a crude way. A very good example of transgression in a movie is *Kill Bill Vol.1*, the scene where Julia Roberts fights with a gang using a sword to slash through some of them leaving in disperse with blood flowing all over the place, this gang was led by Lucy Liu.

Cult films are often made within the possibilities of a genre. This determines what to expect from the movie but most times as often as it happens in recent movies, it would be discovered that there is mixing of genres in a cult cinema which may necessarily not mean that the culture of genre in a cult film is taken seriously or over-exaggerated; which may depend on how it is being used. It may be the kind of soundtrack used in the movie or artificial motives.

Most commonly used genres in cult films are Horror, Action, Fantasy and Science-fiction. The role of 'intertextual' in cult films is that they are invited to compare, connect and link movies of the same similarity or have some scenes which can be linked with other movie(s). A very good example is *Kill Bill* and *The Man with Iron Fists*. The director of the latter is a fan of the director of the former, which leads to taking a cue from his movie. Loose ends are a deliberate or stylistic attempt in a cult film to give the impression of an unfinished movie (Mathijs and Mendik, 2008; Sexton, 2017). This is done sometimes to create suspense, dissatisfaction or an end that keeps viewers puzzled or wondering.

Nostalgia is described as yearning for an ideal past. In cult films, nostalgia is seen as reflecting on the past, thinking of how happy things were in the past and wishing for it to re-occur (Sexton, 2017). In some cult films, it is not necessary for it to be shown, it can be narrated or could be seen in between the movie or at the end of it. The most glaring evidence of cult film is Gore. Gore can be seen in horror movies in which they transgress on the level of pure violence but it is different from cult films. In cult films, Gore is done in a way that focuses on the explicit violence, such as spitting of the human body in and out, vigorous killing without any sense of concern, and blood gushing out of the body (Mathijs and Mendik, 2008; Sexton, 2017; Hills and Sexton, 2016). This concept of defining cult films makes it easy to comprehend and also divides it into several parts for good understanding.

One thing that can be concluded from all these is that cult film relies on the audience and how much they relate to the movie and incorporate some of what they experience through the movie into their immediate and future interactions with the world by way of conversations, fashion and communion.

Methodology

The literature search was carried out using secondary data with the aid of three academic search databases: Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost and Science Direct. The reference list from the initial articles compiled was used to identify and generate further articles to use. Search terms include cult cinema, definitions of cult film, fan appreciation, approaches to cult film and visual appreciation of cult film. The initial search on these three databases using the search terms above resulted in 465 articles. Additional changes were made such as modifying the search terms in title, full text available online, peer reviewed journals only, industry insights, movie reviews and interviews. This led to 65 articles. Additionally, some textbooks and academic materials available for the study were added to the list. After a perusal of some of the articles, their abstracts and other materials, they were sorted into categories: definitions of cult film, phenomenological approach to cult film, fan appreciation, meta cult, anatomy of cult films. Lastly, two Nigerian films (Oleku 1997 and Living in Bondage 1992/93) were examined using certain elements of cult film to argue their ‘cultness’ as established by the study.

Results and Discussion

Phenomenological approach

Mathijis and Mendik (2008) describe the phenomenological approach as shifting attention away from the text to “its appearance in the cultural contexts in which it is produced and received. In other words, it refuses to believe a film has any properties at all, and instead posits that all features of a film are attributed by audiences and receptions- results of the ways in which the film has positioned itself within a cultural context” (2008, p.16). This directly means that scholars and practitioners of cult film are of the view that fans, audience and reception of a film decide the kind of movie that would be seen

in the cinema or watched on a DVD, and this audience are the main reason a movie can be classified as “cult”.

Mathijs and Mendik (2008:369) suggest that audiences are the reason for the study of cult film. The authors claim that when discussing cult film there are two types of audiences; ‘audiences of cult cinema’ and ‘cult audiences of cinema.’ “The first refers to textual properties of a certain kind that any kind of audience can pick up on: and the second to particular kinds of audiences who will apply certain strategies to any kind of cinema.” The authors’ description of the two types of audiences suggests that ‘audiences of cult cinema’ could be any audience as long as the individual or persons like what they see. On the other hand, ‘cult audiences of cinema are the actual fans of cult cinema. This audience can be identified as the main purpose of naming a movie ‘cult.’

Austin (1981:44) asserts that “the nature of its audience and the nature of its exhibition qualify the showing of a film as part of the cult film phenomenon.” This is to say that a movie can only be classified as a cult film through the nature of its audience and the package that comes with it. Furthermore, Austin (1981:45) defines cult film “as a motion picture which is exhibited on a continuing basis, usually at midnight, and gathers a sizeable repeat audience.” This implies that cult film is based on the followership of not just audience who watch movies at irregular hours but audience who follow certain movies classified as cult repeatedly.

Austin (1981) further states that a cult film must contain certain things when asking for what can be seen in a movie to be called cult. First and foremost, “the film must be screened at irregular hours and these screenings must play on a regular and continuing basis. Thus, the occasional re-release and films that are not shown in movie theatres are excluded (p. 44)”. The second is,

“cult films may be uniquely characterised by the repeated attendance of a group of certain individuals (p. 44)”. The author classifies cult films in a form that viewing of cult films are mostly seen on inappropriate hours (mostly in the middle of the night) and are played on a regular basis. Also, Austin (1981) believes that the same group of individuals or audiences who repeatedly go to watch these movies at this hour are the ones that are classified as cult films.

Although this may be true, Hoberman (2008) is of the view that cult film is created by the audience. This author claims that “the audience remakes the movie- sometimes, especially these days, literally. Individuals or groups of individuals fetishize particular movies, usually for reasons not at all intended by the actual filmmakers” (p. 44). This suggests that the audience have the power to create and interpret the movie the way they want it. Hoberman (2008) goes further to claim that the “most widespread form of cultism is centred on movie stars. Stars were made to be fetishized (p. 44)”. Hoberman sees movie stars as a form of spreading cult films, since fans idolise movie stars, they tend to create a followership that is revolved around the movie star’s career and anything that he/she is involved in.

Comparatively, Love (2008) view on cult film partakes with the idea that “a film of any stripe that, while ignored or buried by the general market, and/or critical establishment, is kept alive, or resurrected, thanks to the devotion of a particular section of the audience- often responding to the very elements, extremes, or eccentricities that saw the films fail in the first place (p. 45)”. The author describes cult film as those movies that are reignited by some section of the audience who have particular interest in the very elements that made those films unsuccessful (commercial wise) in the first place. Such elements could be extreme violence, extreme use of nudity and sex appraisal, deliberate poor camera handling, and imitation of bit and pieces of favourite scenes from other cult films.

Furthermore, Love (2008) argues that nowadays many studios, audiences and people are keen to employ 'cult' as though it was a genre in itself but that any film that has any kind of following or high audience participant of whatever size can be regarded as a cult film. Basically, Love (2008) argument on cult cinema surrounds the evidence of particular sets of audience who resurrects a movie which was in hibernation due to its lack of power pulling strength to gather a mass audience which is generally seen in mainstream movies. Also Love (2008) argument complements with Grant (2008) argument- that what really makes a movie cult or what they have in common "is their ability to be at once, transgressive and recuperative. In other words, to reclaim that which they seem to violate "(p. 78) but the difference is Love (2008) sees the resurrection of that which it seems to violate in the hands of the audience. The directors/producers cannot decide how the movie is going to be appreciated.

Fan Appreciation

On the contrary, Lucas (2008) gives a different view but maintains the stance of fan appreciation. Fan is an abbreviated form of the word "fanatic" which has its roots in the Latin word "fanaticus". In the literal sense, "fanaticus" means "of or belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee" as explained by Jenkins (2008). According to Hunter (2016), a fan in the context of film is a devoted follower and enthusiast of a film or actor. Lucas (2008) argues further that "any film that exists well below the general radar of the majority of movie goers, but which has, through word of mouth, attracted a growing circle of rabid devotees over the years (p. 46)". This view seems to disagree with Love (2008), who classifies cult film as any film be it mainstream movies that are well below the general expectation of moviegoers but still attract a rapid circle of extremist over the years. This view can be argued when taking into account the movie *Django Unchained* 2013 by 'Quentin Tarantino' with statistics gotten from (cinemablend.com) saying that

the first eight days of the movie had made \$77.8million and also gathered lots of audience, 42% going to the African American who watched the movie in America before overseas release, and beating Tarantino's \$120 million record set in 2009 with *Inglorious bastards*. This suggests that some mainstream movies can be called a cult film which Eco (1986) notes about *Casablanca* which was a mainstream movie turned into cult "Casablanca became a cult movie because it is not one movie, it is movies" (p. 208).

Furthermore, Lucas (2008) bases his argument on 'intimacy'; by suggesting that cult films are movies that can be shared between and among audience who have similar interest and like-minds of the same movie. For example, if a young man is trying to woo a young woman or man by sending him/her a DVD of his favourite movie; the nature of this gift makes them an audience of two and in this context, whatever that movie is, it's a cult movie because it has been shared as a gesture of 'intimacy'.

Similarly, Peary (2008) is of the opinion that cult films are more attached to the fans of the movie; he claims that "cult film as movies that need to be discussed or talked about by their fans and why they are so attached to such films (p. 47)". In addition, Peary (2008) and Sexton (2017) share Lucas (2008) view on the audience having the same reaction to a particular movie, but Peary (2008) believes that mainstream films even blockbusters can be considered as cult film because their fans today are different from the original mainstream viewers and also this mainstream movies tend to break the rules in a positive way. Examples are *King Kong*, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Citizen Kane*, and *Fast and Furious* are mainstream movies but can be considered cult films.

For Church (2011) "cult films acquire a select but devoted group of fans who engage in repeated screenings, ritual behaviours, and specific reading

strategies. These fans, or cultists gain subcultural capital by championing their object choices as more unique and supposedly less accessible than mass-marketed cinema” (p. 3). This suggests that the author sees cult cinema as fanatics who engage in ritual following of selected and specific movies and believes these fanatics/audience that make cult cinema unique by the direction of their faithfulness towards these movies.

Basically, Church (2011) view on cult cinema is based on the gathering of both approaches (ontological and phenomenological). Be that as it may, Jenkins (2008) approach towards cult cinema is similar to what theorists under the phenomenological approach have been saying but this view is directly based on fandom. Fandom is seen as a part of everyday life and “fans raid mass culture, claiming, its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions. Fans seemingly blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, speaking of characters as if they had an existence apart from their textual manifestations, entering into the realm of the fiction as if it were a tangible place they can inhabit and explore” (p. 433). This suggests that fans are equally responsible in creating their favourite movie to suit their taste. Also, this author believes that fans does not know how to differentiate from the fact and fiction, they seems to confuse reality from film, that fans speak as if the characters or movie star were part of their lives as if these characters are their next door neighbour or close friends.

Jenkins (2008) further claims that “fans cannot as a group be dismissed as intellectually inferior; they often are highly educated, articulate people who come from the middle classes, people who should know better than to spend their time constructing elaborate interpretations of television programs (p. 433)”. Jenkins (2008) description on fans, is that they are not clueless people neither are they rich people; they are middle class people who are highly educated and not intellectually inferior.

Overall, the arguments made by the theorists above (Austin 1981, Lucas 2008, Love 2008, Jenkins 2008 and others), under the phenomenological approach have all said something similar about fan appreciation, the types of audiences, and fans involvement in carrying a particular movie from its hibernation to seeing the light of the day. These theorists have helped the research in understanding the importance of fans/audience to cult cinema.

Meta cult

Interestingly however, Eco (1986) presents and argues with a different approach compared to the other approaches (ontological and phenomenological) explained above on cult film but likewise intertwined which the author calls 'Meta cult'.

Eco (1986) in the book *Travels in Hyper-reality*, gives an argument on cult cinema by analysing Casablanca. He says there are two types of cult cinema; one is 'accidental cult' and the second is 'Meta cult'. Eco (1986) explains accidental cult as the reproduction of different scenes/topoi packed up together to make a movie that though does not seem to be cult, but eventually appreciated to be cult. On the latter, he claims the required expertise is not only inter-cinematic; it is inter media, in the sense that the addressee must not only know other movies but all the mass media gossip about movies. This presupposes a Casablanca universe in which cult has become the normal way of enjoying movies. Thus in this case we witness an instance of Meta cult, or of cult about cult- a cult culture.

This suggests that Eco (1986) sees directors/producers of movies such as Casablanca deliberately incorporate references of other movies into their movies to create a kind of nostalgia among fans of cult films. Additionally, Eco (1984) gives an opinion on cult film which entails some degree of fan appreciation related to phenomenological approach theorists such as Jenkins

(2008) and Peary (2008); the movie in question must 'be loved' by the audience and the movie must provide some sort of fantasy world for the fans to feel among, to feel invited as if the movie was made solely for them. He goes further to give requirements in classifying a movie or book cult- the work must be loved; it must provide a completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the fan's private sectarian world, a world about which one can make up quizzes and play trivia games.

Furthermore, Eco (1984) argues that "in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of the original relationship with the whole" (1984, p.463). This means that a cult film must show that difference that makes it a cult film by doing something totally different from any other style of creation. Overall, Eco (1984, 1986) have made it clear that cult film can be visualised from different angles other than the intertextuality in the movie and fan appreciation. This author has pointed out that sometimes, the directors/producers of such films like *Django Unchained* (2013) consciously what they do to make their movies to be seen as a cult film.

All in all, reflecting on all the definitions and explanations provided by the theorists, it can be concluded that cult film can be defined in various ways but they all follow a similar theme which are:

- i. Active and lively communal following;
- ii. Common techniques in cult films are loose ends in storylines, a sense of nostalgia intertextual references and gore;
- iii. Despite limited accessibility in most cases, they enjoy constant market value and long-lasting public presence;

- iv. They challenge coherent storytelling and genre conventions and cannot be categorised under the notions of good or bad taste (Mathijis and Mendik, 2008).

Anatomy of Cult Films in Relation to Nigerian Films

This analysis is related to phenomenological approach and in this approach, the audience is taken into consideration; the audience and reception received from a movie makes it cult. This approach “shifts the attention from the text to its appearance in the cultural contexts in which it is produced and received” (Mathijs and Mendik, 2008, p.15). So many critics and theorists have given their verdict on fans appreciation such as Church (2011), Austin (1981) and Jenkins (2008).

To this effect, Church (2011) classifies cult cinema as a group of devoted fans or fanatics who engage in ritual following of selected and specific movies and believes these fanatics or audiences who make cult cinema unique direct their faithfulness towards these movies.

For Jenkins (2008), “fans raid mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions. Fans seemingly blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, speaking of characters as if they had an existence apart from their textual manifestations, entering into the realm of the fiction as if it were a tangible place they can inhabit and explore” (p. 433). In a like manner, SSHRC (2020) suggests that a cult film can be defined through various inferences that are made up of four major elements. These are:

- i. *Anatomy*: this is the film itself and its features such as its content, format, style and generic modes; *consumption*: this relates to its reception meaning how the audience receives it, how they celebrate it

and the critical receptions; *political economy*: this relates to the financial and physical conditions related to the film by way of its channels of presentation, its ownerships, intentions and the spaces and times of its exhibition; *cultural status*: this refers to the way in which a cult film blends into a region or time. More specifically, the kind of comments it forms on its surroundings by critiquing, offending, acceding or exploiting the dominant culture of the region. One point to note however is that all of these elements do not have to be present in the same movie but each of them is of great significance in making a film cult (SSHRC, 2020). This means that once one of these elements can be spotted as a dominant theme in a film, more often than not, it can be classed as a cult film; particularly when the anatomy of cult film is examined against the backdrop of some Nigerian films. As such, using the following elements of cult film, it can be argued that some Nigerian films have indeed achieved the status of cult film as explained by cultographies.com (2012).

- ii. *Cult films are intertextual*: particularly in the Nigerian context, cult films invite comparisons, connections and linkages with other films as well as other parts of culture. This involves the addition of references to texts from other films in things such as quotes but also by calling into historical backgrounds, archetypes and cultural myths for example as seen in *Sango* (1997). On the subtle level, intertextuality offers playful inside jokes for devoted audiences. Using intertextuality exquisitely puts cult films at the center of fashions. An example is *Oleku* (1997).
- iii. *Loose ends*: many cult films leave room for loose ends in their styles and narration. This means that the film leaves an impression of being unfinished. Good examples of loose ends include dissatisfying or puzzling endings or endings that are insultingly conformist. This can

also apply to scenes that show notable signs of material deleted at a later stage due to perhaps studio interference or *force majeure*. Furthermore, loose ends violate continuity and disrespect the narrative bond. These interventions give viewers the freedom to speculate on the story and polish or radicalise on the style on behalf of the movie for example *Arugba* (2010).

- iv. *Nostalgia*: many cult films have the core feature of being able to trigger a sense of nostalgia and a yearning for an idealised past. This can be part of the film's story. For example, *Saworoide* (1999), *Agogo Eewo* (2002) and *Oleku* (1997) rely on their ability to evoke nostalgia for the picturesque appearance of *Yorubaland*. Using Abeokuta and Ibadan for these movies added to their appeal and was able to submerge audiences in a past world.
- v. *Time-travel*: in combination with nostalgia, time-travel often appears in cult films. Due to the fact that it creates loose ends defies logic and cohesion of narration as well as space-time continuity, cult films use as an ideal technique. It allows the past, future and parallel present to be visualised and guarantees that speculation on how to interpret the story is generated as well as where and when it belongs as can be seen for films such as *Ever After* (2017).

While cult films in Nigeria may not enjoy the same status and commitment enjoyed by cult films in the West through things like fan conventions and audience creation, viewers are nevertheless committed. This can be explained as fandom. There is a sense of communion and community with these films. After viewing such films, audiences feel a sense of camaraderie and fellowship which can happen before, during or after the viewing (Cultographies.com, 2012). For example *Living in Bondage* (1992/93) and the 2019 sequel. They report a sense of belonging to a group after viewing such

films as seen in *Oleku* (1997) and *Agbara nla* (1992). These movies gave birth to fashion styles (*Oleku dress*) and a popular statement (*ayamatanga*) which still evokes fear and awe in the minds of many Nigerians decades after the films were produced.

Living in Bondage

Living in bondage is a two part Nigerian film produced in 1992/1993. It was directed by Chris Obi Rapu and shot straight to video starring Kenneth Okonkwo as Andy and Nnena Nwabueze as Merit. Andy and Merit are a young couple facing several obstacles - infidelity, redundancy, loss of their savings in a bogus investment and low self-confidence. Constantly comparing himself with his friends and ignoring Merit's support and patience, Andy decides to obtain wealth by any means possible and resorts to money rituals. He sacrifices Merit but his gains are short lived as he is haunted by her ghost. Disturbed by those he surrounds himself with, and with drastic consequences, he eventually gives it all up, but this comes at a great cost. A sequel to the movie titled Living in Bondage: Breaking free was released in 2019.

Intertextual:

Emeka – 1 year ago: the era of shoulder pads...my mom wore those like crazy during her time.

Ezenwa Perfect Okoli – 1 year ago: no be today Benz begin cause wahala oh. Hehehe.

Nostalgia:

Ernestina Madufor – 1 year ago: OMG, I feel nostalgic watching this today. Evergreen movie I must say. God rest the soul of the dead in this great movie. Amen.

Ejeregbe Emmanuel – 1 year ago: I was just 11 years old when this movie came out. I vividly remember when my neighbour's father bought this movie, I had to sneak away from the house to go and watch it. I watched it for 6 hours (VHS) parts 1 & 2. When I came back home after a long absence, my mother after being scared flogged me with a cane (laugh emoji) because of LIVING IN BONDAGE O!

Nwosu Kingsley – 6 months ago: May 31st 2020 and this movie still makes a lot of sense and brings back memories.

Adaugo Orji – 1 year ago: this movie made part of my growing up.

Loose ends:

Hauwa Usman – 6 months ago: Merit deserved so much better haba.

Eric Abebe– 4 months ago: I so much love this movie but the ending is somehow sha. I wish he appreciated his wife more.

Time travel:

Cynthia E – 11 months ago: came back to see this after seeing the sequel. Now this movie is the movie of the millennium. January 2020.

Stan – 6 months ago: really nice seeing how things were those days and the transformation witnessed since then.

Miracle Davidson – 5 months ago: after watching the sequel on Netflix, I told myself that I really need to see this old one.

Nnedi Ajiene Nwankwo – 6 months ago: Heard so much about this movie. Finally getting to watch it in preparation for the sequel on Netflix. Who else is with me?

Oleku

Oleku is an adaptation of Professor Akinwunmi Ishola's novel. Oleku was released by Mainframe films and Television Production in 1997 and was directed by Tunde Kelani. It stars Yemi Shodimu as Ajani and Feyikemi Abodunrin as Asake. Ajani is a final year student of the University of Ibadan who is under pressure from his mother to get married. He ends up in a quadrangle with three beautiful women: Asake, his beautiful long term girl friend who is a teacher; Lola, a pretty first year student he met in the university and; lastly, Sade, a childhood friend who eventually takes the centre stage of the love drama. Set in the 1970s, all movie elements reflect just that.

Intertextual:

Catherine Ojo – 4 years ago: one of my favourite classics in Yoruba movies, the songs, the poems, the fashion, effortlessly stunning...

Kennie Kuti – 1 year ago: fantastic movie anytime...it still feels like a new release. Well done to the best actors and actresses teaching us ijinle Yoruba and lyrics for taming our beautiful ladies.

Nostalgia:

Wuraola Adesiyon – 2 years ago: amazing movie...am here to watch for further understanding cos when I first saw it, I was really young. Well done sir.

Obaile Taofeek – 3 years ago: wooo...sweet memory...

Daniels Rotimi – 2 years ago: many nostalgic feelings about this movie. I read the book in which Ajani actually died and it was in my high school. I

remember going to the washroom with the book because it is very interesting and seems so real... and 1998 I saw the movie which actually set my path on trying to gain admission into the university of Ibadan thinking there was still ale erebe...thanks to all the crew.

Time travel:

Olanrewaju Olamide – 1 year ago: and here I am in 2019. Funnily, I've seen this movie countless times since I was young, I just can't get enough! See toasting with iro and buba, when can we have more of these cultural and educating movies? I love em...all thanks to our dear legendary TUNDE KELANI. God bless you!

James – 2 years ago: I still somehow think this movie should be the guide of how to woo ladies. Pure elegance and style from the actors. Just wow!

Loose ends:

Adekunle Adedokun – 5 years ago: I love this movie like die. It does haunt me. I feel sad for Asake.

Sekinat Bello – 3 months ago: I somehow wish the movie ended differently but it is still a beautiful story.

Conclusion

Overall, it is appropriate to say that cult cinema should not be defined the way it was defined in the past like Grant (2008) asserting that “what really makes a movie cult or what they have in common “is their ability to be at once, transgressive and recuperative, in other words, to reclaim that which they seem to violate” (p. 78) but rather they should be viewed from the angle of

what the audience does with them particularly in the Nigerian context. This is because cult films do not have a single feature that unifies them.

Moreover, the kind of films that are being made in this present time have also made it difficult to measure and define cult film or even say a film is cult because the introduction of new technology such as mobile phones with high quality cameras in-built in them, the internet, the easy accessibility of DVDs including watching films on the internet have disoriented the original form of defining and measuring cult cinema.

On the final analysis, it will be appropriate to define cult cinema as a type of movie from any genre that has a devoted fan following. While it is difficult to measure the status of Nigerian films against the backdrop of Western cult cinema, the fact that some of these films have attracted a considerable fan following, dialogue or buzz, audience creation and participation that have transgressed space and time shows that Nigerian films can and have indeed become cult films whether or not this fact is known or accepted by majority of film scholars.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the movie industry in Nigeria needs to take the categorisation of their films by genre a lot more seriously if there is to be any hope of competing on an international level. This will make more films able to attain the cult status as their plot and presentation will be more streamlined and focused. Additionally, record keeping needs to be encouraged and improved so that the audience can give unbiased feedback about films which can help to understand how these films have been received particularly if there is still buzz around certain films years after production. This needs to go beyond word of mouth awareness between a small group of fans to include the producers and directors of notable films. Lastly, and perhaps most

importantly, film makers, actors, scholars, researchers and film enthusiasts need to work together to define and agree on the elements and characteristics of cult movies in the Nigerian context based on adequate research into the history, development and growth of cult cinema the world over.

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Youtube Links

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