The Dyke
www.thedyke.msu.ac.zw

ISSN 1815-9036 (Print)

The evolution of music recording technologies in Zimbabwe

Weston Chimbudzi [a] and Richard Muranda[b]

[c]Wonder Maguraushe, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

ARTICLE HISTORY
Published online October 15, 2021

ABSTRACT
Music recording technology has undergone a paradigm shift in the Zimbabwean recording industry. There has been a transition from the use of analogue to digital recording technology in the country. The study borrows the Technological Determinism theory to explore the evolution from analogue to digital of the recording industry. Analogue technology was used from 1956 to the 1990s, and songs were recorded on the reel, and stored on vinyl discs. The compact disc (CD) storage was introduced from which CD files began to be distributed to consumers as digital copies by recording studios. Recording studios in Zimbabwe have embraced digital technology as music is created, and distributed, in the digital realm. The researchers deployed a qualitative methodology to purposively gather data from record producers, studio owners, and musicians, to analyse changes in the Zimbabwe recording industry. Technological complexity, sophistication dexterity, innovativeness and knowledgeability of producers now determine the quality of music productions. Thus, the research explores the shifting of recording processes from analogue to digital in Zimbabwean studios. Further, the study reveals that technological developments directly impact the modus operandi and determine the relevance, and business viability, of the Zimbabwean mu- sic recording-scape. Further research can accrue benefits to the recording industry particularly in the use of digital software packages.

KEYWORDS
analogue; digital; home studio; musician; prostudio; MIDI; recording industry

The Dyke
www.thedyke.msu.ac.zw

15(1):34–50
ISSN 1815-9036 (Print)

CONTACT: Richard Muranda murandar@staff.msu.ac.zw

1. Introduction

Numerous changes have characterised the Zimbabwean recording industry since the establishment of commercial recording in the country. This article discusses influences of analogue and digital technologies on the evolution of western recording technologies in Zimbabwe. The paper explores technologies governing interactions among musicians, recording engineers, producers, and other incidental musical players. The way the recording industry personnel interacted depended in part on the music recording technologies which they were using. In this study, some reflections were drawn about changes that are characteristic in local music genres which stem from technological vicissitudes.

The researchers investigated the evolution of recording technologies in Zimbabwe using unstructured interviews with recording engineers, producers and musicians. Of particular interest was to note the nature of relationships between the musicians and the producers with regards to what each of them feels is the ideal material for production. The first section of the paper discusses the influence of analogue technology on Zimbabwe's recording industry and deals with how Mbira music, which was rejected by analogue era commercial music producers, gained popularity during the digital era. The second section focuses on the advantages of analogue recording technology, followed by the advantages of digital recording technology. The third, and last, section chronicles the influence of digital technology in Zimbabwe's recording industry which saw the birth of Zimdancehall, and the rise of the riddim, culture.

In the *Zimdancehall* –riddim culture era, analogue, and digital fusion, became prevalent (Mugari, 2016). Although chanters were incorporated in Sungura music, their place and relevance, faced competition from the emerging trends of a steady rise in *Zimdancehall* popular chanting.

2. Background and context

Commercial music production has gone through a series of vicissitudes, and a number of positive developments that uplifted the recording industry in Zimbabwe. Muranda (2021) mentions that the inception of digital technology in the Zimbabwean recording industry has ushered in several changes in the way recordings take shape.

In the past, pro-studios who dominated the industry enjoyed autonomy and influenced goings-on in the recording industry in Zimbabwe. Today, the formal set-up of the industry has drastically melted into a proliferation of informal operations, where the majority of studios are now being run in the backyard without clear cut standards. Gondo (2012), Sibanda (2012) and Vhori (2012) say that the operating landscape, along with prevailing economic, and socio-political circumstances, have motivated adoption of genres like R 'n' B, Hip Hop, and Dancehall, as artists strive to appeal internationally.

With the advent of digital recording technology, the media has turned digital, and so, have musical products. Piracy has soared, thereby plummeting earnings for analogue- based products. Reluctance to take up digital recording has adversely affected pro- studios, leaving them alienated from both artists, and the consumer clientele. According to Scannell (2001), Niaah (2008), Leyshon (2009) and Muranda (2021) pro-studios' hegemony has slackened due to the emergence of home studios which have liberated musicians by accepting a variety of music genres like Hip Hop, Urban Grooves, and Ragga, in their music production.

The international music recording history is punctuated by the following epochs; the Acoustic era (1877–1925), Electrical era (1925–1945), and

Magnetic era (1945–1975), which have determined some technological developments. Some of the developments lost their relevance as they could not sustain the people's livelihoods, while others have undergone a dynamic process of change, from bulk analogue equipment to dealing with the microchip in virtual equipment, in order to record music.

In southern Africa, music recording began in the early 20th century. According to Zindi, (2015), Gallo was opened in 1932 in South Africa as the first recording company in southern Africa. Records they produced were sent to Britain, for pressing, until the 1950s when a local pressing company was established in South Africa. Gallo then opened a branch in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) (Pietilä, 2015).

Music production in Zimbabwe began in the 1960s, mainly spearheaded by South African based companies, Gallo and Teal Records, who used analogue recording technology (Zindi, 2015). Scannell (2001) also indicates that the first Zimbabwean recording companies were of South African origin. The recording companies' interests were purely business-related, and nothing less than that. The Zimbabwean recording culture was, hence, the adoption of the pioneer companies' design, since the enterprise was a novelty, locally. The borrowed, or adopted legacy, dominated Zimbabwe's music recording culture during the colonial period, to- wards, and soon after, political independence in 1980. Traces of colonial influences continued to manifest in musical productions as in several other spheres of people's lives (Dube, 1996).

Thaker (2021) informs that the eras that humanity has passed through, exert de- mands on how certain tasks had to be executed; hence, the need for relevant knowledge, and skills. The absence or presence of pertinent skills, and tools, mean that humans could tackle or circumvent challenges. All the above changes require some adjustments in terms of knowledge, and skills, in order to survive, and that includes the recording industry too.

3. Engaging Veblen's Technological Determinism theory

The study borrows Thorstein Veblen's (1994) Technological Determinism theory which holds that technology is a driving force behind changes that take place in society. People and cultures always move, and evolve, from simple to complex (Stone, 2015). Technology accounts for much of what people are capable of doing in each era, and how they undertake their daily routines, in particular, recording of music as envisaged in the current study.

Substantial technological advancement is driven by a need to make the highest possible production with ease, yet, with minimal capital, and labour investment. Medosch (2005) advances that science and technology are the forces central to the shaping of social change. Evolution is always imminent, and imperative, pertaining to how things are done.

Grounded by Veblen's (1994) Technological Determinism theory, the study explores how digital inception necessitated the evolution of Zimbabwe's recording industry from analogue to present practices. Thus, the study focuses on how the technologies deployed in Zimbabwe's recording industry have shaped the morphing of musical genres.

4. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative methodology to solicit data from purposively selected record producers, studio owners and musicians, concerning the prevailing changes in the recording industry in Zimbabwe. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather ideas informing the study from respondents

(Galletta, 2013). The interviews were conducted with studio owners, producers and selected musicians. As players in the industry, the researchers also engaged participant observations in studio undertakings within the Zimbabwean recording industry.

The researchers' interaction with various technologies in the industry escalated understanding of the changes which prevail in the music industry, stemming from the coming on board of new technologies. Researchers used participant observations to broaden their understanding of the information elicited through interviews. In addition to the above, the document analysis approach was deployed to cast further insights into the Zimbabwe recording industry (Bhattacherjee, 2012). This was meant to corroborate other techniques used, like the ones mentioned above.

Secondary sources such as newspaper articles as well as musical websites were used to expand the spectrum of researchers' views of the recording industry. The three methods used helped unearth the data needed for the study, and subsequently, informed the ultimate conclusions.

5. The influence of analogue technology on Zimbabwe's recording industry

Musical events have been a part of people's daily activities since time immemorial. Before the invention of music recording technology, one had to be present at the site of a performance for them to witness any musical event. Analogue recordings were the first to enable people experience music performances subsequently—outside the time of performance—, and also beyond the geographical boundaries of the original performance.

In the analogue recording, acoustic sound-waves are captured directly onto a medium without being converted first to a digital signal (Boyd, 2001). With simple analogue technology, the sound is physically played using 'real' musical instruments. Transducers[1] play a critical role in the transference of signal from source to the storage medium. Physical components, which play various roles in the processing of sound, can be seen by the human eye.

In analogue recording, the sound-wave can hardly be seen[2]. It is only gauged through LED[3] signal level indicators, unless an output transducer such as a speaker is used. The storage mediums for analogue recordings were vinyl and audiocassette. Commercial music production in Zimbabwe was pioneered by foreign recording companies that used analogue technology. According to Lwanda and Kanjo (2013), Gallo Records came to Zimbabwe in the 1950s. Around 1960, Teal Records, also from South Africa, was established in the then Salisbury (now Harare) operating in rivalry with Gallo (Scannel, 2001). Gallo became the most influential company with regards to southern African music production (Lwanda & Kanjo, 2013).

The cradle of music recording in Zimbabwe hinges on Gallo and Teal recording companies which are originally South African (Zindi, 2015). The two companies later morphed into ZMC and Gramma Records respectively, and recorded local music genres using analogue technology.

Apart from directly recording black African music, Gallo Records also funded, ethnomusicologist, Hugh Tracey's non-commercial music recordings. Hugh Tracey preserved indigenous African traditional music and popularised it across the world (Lwanda & Kanjo, 2013).

[1] Devices that change a signal from one form to another

[2] There is no visual representation of sound.

[3] Light-emitting diode signal level indicator.

The *mbira*, which had limited space at commercial music recording stables, found a home within ethnomusicological recordings such as those by Hugh Tracey which propelled it to make a big name overseas (Pietilä, 2015).

Many local recordings at the time did not find space within the commercial studios. Hugh Tracey also recorded Zimbabwean Afro-jazz musician, August Musarugwa, using funds from Gallo Records (Lwanda & Kanjo, 2013). The international influence of Hugh Tracey propelled Musarugwa's song, *Skokiaan*, to be an international hit.

Makwenda (2005) says there are numerous cover versions from various artists across the globe who include, Louis Armstrong, Hugh Masekela, Nico Carsten, Robert Delgado, James Last, Sam Klair, Joe Carr, Nteni Piliso, and Herb Albert. Using his field recordings, Hugh Tracey established the International Library of African Music in 1954 (Perman, 2015). This highly exposed the traditional African genres to the global listenership, apart from preservation, given that the music was mainly non-commercial, but communal as passed on over generations through oral tradition.

6. Mbira music and popularity of mbira instrument

The Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) created non-commercial music records using analogue technology. RBC played a remarkable role in popularising the *mbira* instrument locally. Turino (2010) advances that *Chemutengure,* one of Thomas Mapfumo's early hits, was a RBC production. Examples of groups that benefited from radio analogue recording programmes include Zata Zemba, Mazaimbira, Mhuri yekwaGweshe, Mhuri yekwaMadhonhochirwa, Mhuri yekwaGumira, Mushawaparara Mbira Group, and Mhuri yekwaMujuru. The RBC also recorded *Amasiganda/Dzemagitare* represented by artists such as Ngwaru Mapundu, Jordan Chataika, John White, Jackson Chinembiri, and Elisha Tome. All these musicians maintained distinct styles within their genre. There was variety and listeners were assured of hearing different tunes or sounds.

Turino (2010) opines that ethnomusicological activity was instrumental in laying ground to *mbira* international recognition. This belief is also supported by Perman (2015) who adds that the involvement of missionaries facilitated the migration of Dumisani Maraire and Kamba Simango to the United States of America. Chitando (2002) says that musicians-cum-teachers Dumisani Maraire and Ephat Mujuru are prominent figures among the indigenous people who introduced *mbira* music and spirituality to North American audiences and highly prompted inquisitiveness and interest in Zimbabwean *mbira* music.

On *YouTube*, there are many videos on *mbira* music tutorials and performances done by people of different ethnicities, indicating that the instrument has transcended cultural boundaries. Musicians and advocates such as Jennifer Kyker, Erica Azim, Frank Hand, Paul Berliner, and Jocelyn Moon, continue to propel the *mbira* in and outside of Zimbabwe. Thriving *mbira* communities of performers and enthusiasts have also emerged in the United States (especially along the Pacific Coast), Canada, Japan, German and the United Kingdom among others (Perman, 2015).

The *mbira* has largely remained in the traditional realm as far as ethnomusicological and radio recordings are concerned. It essentially dwelled on traditional conventions of *mbira* modes such as *Nhemamusasa, Bukatiende, Mahororo, and Chipembere*. The resonance of the instrument with the international world has made the local recording companies budge and embrace and record more mbira musicians. This has since accommodated fusion of the instrument with guitars, drum sets and other

western instruments such as brass and woodwind.

The survival of a genre through time and commercial processes hinges on its popularity, among other things (Lena & Paterson, 2008). *Mbira* music is now popular in the academic field as well as in the Zimbabwe recording industry owing to the popularity it has gained across borders.

Wilfred Nyamasvisva, musician, and now band leader of Mawungira eNharira, stated that their earlier group (Mbira DzeNharira) was turned away several times when they attempted to record with commercial analogue studios. Their music was labelled 'unmarketable'. However, Silvester Tapfumaneyi of ZBC offered to record their first album, “Rinemanyanga Hariputirwi,” and their music was well received by the public. The above situation opened doors for them to be accepted for commercial recording. They worked to adapt their *mbira* instruments to sound distinct voice ranges emulating the interlocking lead rhythm and bass set up of guitars.

Some analogue mbira recordings deviated from the complex traditional norms regarding accompaniment and progression. Thomas Mapfumo’s music is based on *Chimurenga* and *toyi-toyi*[4] themes fused with South African urban jive and *Marabi* (Turino, 2002). Master Chivero also popularised progressions that borrowed simple *Rhumba* and *Sungura* progression of I IV V V, as opposed to the complex traditional movements which encompass minor chords.

The researchers have witnessed the growth of recorded *mbira* repertoire, especially considering the coming on board of groups such as Mbira DzeNharira, Mawungira ENharira which were preceded by Ephat Mujuru and Chioniso Maraire. Other musicians who made names through the use of *mbira* include Beulah Dyoko, Stella Chiweshe, and Mbuya Madhuve. Currently, some young academic musicians are now composing *mbira*-based songs. These include the likes of Edith Katiji, Hope Masike, Vimbai Zimuto and Tafadzwa Matiure.

The fusion of mbira with guitars in Thomas Mapfumo’s music can be considered the beginning of contemporary improvisation. Subsequently, Andy Brown and many youths, especially Chioniso Maraire, took the *mbira* to greater improvisational heights. They have managed to place the unique lamella sound within contexts novel to the *mbira* modes. For instance, vocals are sometimes sung in English and embedded in western-style chord progressions and song structures. The use of verse and chorus conjoined by a bridge is ‘foreign’ to traditional conventions of *mbira* performances. The use of a flexible and easier to play *Nyunga nyunga*; a hybrid *mbira*, results from compelling emphasis within academic circles. Its keys are tuned to a pentatonic sound. This makes it more viable and easier to manipulate, hence, its embracement by the majority of contemporary artists. Among the trending artists, Jah Prayzah and Andy Muridzo are examples of musicians who fuse their art with *mbira*. The next section discusses *Sungura* as a genre which emerged in the analogue dispensation.

7. *Sungura* genre in the analogue era

Sungura music thrived on producer hegemony to emerge as the most outstanding genre as it was the producers’ favourite. The recording was an enterprise for financial gain; hence, the main object of recording companies was to make money out of all the recordings made. Bothwell Nyamhondera, former producer (Grammar Records), underscored, in an interview on 4

[4] A jogging drive that serves as a morale booster.

November 2020, that recording studio time was treated like gold, and as such, the recording cost was more time-based than total work accomplished. Hence, recording studios were equipped with timers that kicked into action at the beginning of a recording session. Because musicians were unable to pay for their recordings, they were recorded under contracts. The contracts bound musicians to an average of 15% royalty money, and the rest of the earning would be channelled to studio costs. In this capitalist approach, there was no time to waste on amateur musicians or uncertainty encased genres.

Copycats, conflicts and rivalry emerged in *Sungura* music during the analogue period. Muranda and Maguraushe (2014) advance that the influence of producers inculcated a culture of copycats and emulators. As musicians strove to land recording contracts, they impulsively toed musical styles of already recorded material to impress on audition. However, music-making is generally a difficult process that is intrinsically constructed. Therefore, it is the capabilities of an individual and the psychological environment which informs their imagination to compose a song.

Wellington Mareva, Band Leader of Mupandawana Knight Riders, stated in an interview on 10 January 2021 that, 'during the analogue era, musicians deemed to be incapable of putting together a tight recording, were easily turned away to work on their act until it was acceptable to the producer. Resultantly, upcoming musicians emulated projects that the producers had accepted earlier.' Successful musicians found their tracks being trailed by fly-by-night musicians. Alick Macheso penned the song *Murondatsimba* to vent out his anger at musicians who allegedly copied his brand of *Sungura*. In this song, Macheso challenges 'copycats' to come up with their lines and not wait for him to record then convert it to make it their work.

Due to emulation, many *Sungura* bands' sound is monotonous because their music is the same. Examples include the music of First Farai, Mark Ngwazi, Nicholas Zacharia, Paradzai Mesi, Simon Mutambi, and Somandla Ndebele. This diminishes the distinctive identity of artists' creative dimensions. While musicians are shaped and inspired to emulate their forerunners within a genre, it is respectful to come up with one's own identity. Musicians may play common chord progressions and song layout within a genre.

A former producer with ZMC Records, submitted that:

> early musicians like James Chimombe, John Chibadura, Jonah Moyo, Ketai Muchawaya, Knowledge Kunenyati, Leonard Dembo, Lovemore Majaivhana, Marko Sibanda, Nduna Malaba, Oliver Mtukudzi, Paul Matavire, Simon Chimbetu, Solomon Skhuza, and Thomas Mapfumo played some selected unique versions of *Sungura* songs. Though they emulated *Kanindo* and *Rhumba* in essence, each musician maintained an identity within their lines of compositions. Despite musicians playing the same genre, their productions were distinctly different.

Khulekani Moyo, Producer at GM Records, stated that

> because *Sungura* attracted a lucrative market, it became the most favoured genre. The popularity of *Sungura* led recording engineers and producers to get accustomed and specialised in it at the expense of other genres such *Amasiganda*, *mbira*, Dancehall, and gospel. *Sungura* became popular with many people who had hopes of recording music in future.

When genres such as rap and *Zimdancehall,* which thrive on backtracks and lip-synching, later emerged, they took time to be embraced. The musicians do not always use real musical instruments and this led the audiences to sceptical reception during the early days. It is important in the next discussion to explore the merits that accrued on the use of analogue recording technology.

8. Merits of analogue recording technology

The analogue recording era was characterised by big companies which invested hugely in the recording processes. Musicians enjoyed full band performances where various talents complimented each other (the inspiration of playing together). The companies helped brand musicians by nurturing discovered talent amongst artists. The A & R departments scouted for talented musicians and contracts were signed. Wellington Mareva, stated that 'the benefits that artists enjoyed included 'free' recording and marketing of their works.' The recordings were not done free of charge because the recording company retained the bulk of earnings to defray recording and marketing costs. Musicians were lured to sign contracts, and the recording companies, awarded them a percentage of royalties. Jonah Moyo, Devera Ngwena Jazz Band Musician, observed that:

> some musicians who threatened to withdraw from their contracts were given musical equipment, houses or cars by the recording companies as payment to motivate and retain them. Others were incentivised with promotional videos. Promotional copies were produced and strategically distributed for no payment.

Knowledge Kunenyati, Band Leader of Kasongo Band, said that 'recording companies were after making a profit and they subjected prospective groups to strict auditioning.' Changes were suggested on how songs were to be structured for presentation. Subsequently, bands were branded according to recording companies' preferences. Compliance with recording company standards or expectations guaranteed artists a recording contract. It was a great achievement to get a nod after an audition. This implies that the genre played by a musician had to be approved by the music producer and this gave rise to the growth of *Sungura* ahead of other genres.

Jabulani Ndlovu, Music Producer at Trutone Studios, submitted that:

> Signing a recording contract bailed many musicians who had no sufficient capital to invest in the recording process because of the high costs involved. By retaining exclusive rights to the work of musicians, recording companies made huge profits. This was also made even more lucrative by the fact that analogue technology proffered little if any room for manipulation of products.

As a result, music produced during the analogue era was less susceptible to piracy. The most convenient way one could enjoy music without necessarily having bought it was through listening to it on the radio or pay to play on jukeboxes. Radio and television stations worked with recording companies to market new releases from customised recordings which they broadcast. Knowledge Kunenyati bemoaned the bygone era saying that:

> Nowadays musicians can no longer record easily because recording companies request payment before any recording is done. Moreover, the current crop of producers is more focused on money, and not necessarily the quality of the product. It is the musician who has to be particular what he wants to give out to people, otherwise as long he/she has the money to pay, recording is guaranteed.

Another musician stated that 'during the analogue era, there was little congestion in recording studios, only serious musicians who worked on merit were recorded.' Nowadays anyone who wishes to record can do so, giving rise to several musicians competing for airplay. The above referred situation leads to corruption as musicians bribe presenters to be accorded airplay.

During the analogue era, session musicians made money out of musicians who had no substantive bands. The involvement of a session musician in a project adds some new flavour to a song. Session artists were relevant during the analogue era for they wielded unique skills and creativeness in playing real instruments. The arrival of digital technology morphed the *modus operandi* of the recording industry; hence the following segment delves into how the recording industry was shaped.

9. Digital technology in Zimbabwe's recording industry

Digital technology has kept players in Zimbabwe at par with trending international music recording practices. Like in Jamaica, fledging recording studios, now in every neighbourhood, make recording inexpensive using computer technology (Niaah, 2008). The era of digital recording has democratised the playing field in music recording, delinking pro-studios from total control, and centring new genres on home studios (Niaah, 2008). It turned around the roles of individuals in the industry, compacting many posts into one. The producer became the main actor in the industry, gobbling the roles of the analogue A & R, recording and mixing engineers.

Furthermore, Clive Mukundu, mentioned that 'most producers are keyboard players who use their skills to create sounds for the rest of the musical instruments by simply assigning tracks to instrument that are recognised by a given synthesiser within the Digital Audio Workstation (DAW).' He decries the general absence of timbre diversity found in real musical instruments since the MIDI-produced sounds cannot hide the glaring artificial feel. MIDI lacks the harmonics which build the natural instrument timbre. However, some gospel outfits have made significant strides using the digital instrument approach. The role of session musicians during recording is slowly getting decimated by MIDI sequencing which gave birth to the production and use of *riddims*.

10. Riddim culture in *Zimdancehall*

Zimdancehall artists were mocked as *vapfanha vemaband muhomwe* (youths with their bands in the pockets) when they appeared for the first time on the public stage during national galas in the early 2000s (Chitando, 2002). This was because they brought backtracks on CDs or memory sticks. These backtracks would have been performed based on a riddim as the artist sings lyrics. They would call out to the DJ, or 'selector' for a backtrack number to play so they sing along on the stage. Initially, many people disliked this approach, and sometimes fans pelted them with cans on stage in protest.

The dislike emanated from the analogue ontology where traditional conventions held that a musician was expected to perform on an instrument with a band during a live performance. The art of creating melodies and rhythms with notes in digital set-ups differs from using real instruments. *Zimdancehall* artists prefer pre-recorded instrumentation during live performances in a bid to preserve the originality of digitally created music.

Digital recording technology has influenced the emergence of numerous *Zimdancehall* artists. '*Mangoma*,' as *Zimdancehall* is affectionately labelled by its followers, is a genre that is largely riddim-based, and thrives on traits borrowed from Jamaican dancehall. The genre exploits a booming bassline and a prominent kick drum signature. The sound is digitally produced and most often features percussive timbre to complement the rhythmic nature of the music. Lyrics are rhymed within these bass, and drum throbs, and the thudding groove. Fullerton (2017) says dancehall has sexually explicit tendencies which also manifest in women's sensually provocative fashions. Although sexuality has always been a part of popular traditional genres such as *Jiti* and *Dembe*, *Zimdancehall* have taken the use of *riddims* to new heights, and contexts, a novel phenomenon in Zimbabwean music culture.

Dancehall is associated with partying binges where minimum self-restraint

is exercised. The researchers view *Zimdancehall* as a style that runs with a feeling of despair that needs instant solace. A *Zimdancehall* producer who chose anonymity stated that:

> there is rampant use of 'sedative' drugs such as *mutoriro,* heroin, Cordain*, Kirango, mangemba, nyaope, maragado, zed, musombodhiya, tegu-tegu, katsotsi, soldier, double-punch, glue, bronco,* and *mbanje* concoctions that Zimdancehall musicians take. *Passa Passa* street parties are platforms to promote new musicians and new *riddims.*

These parties are open to the public and organised through a collaboration between producers and drug dealers. Another *Zimdancehall* producer stated that, '*Passa Passa* street parties aim to create a market for drug dealers who often stand behind, and fund such functions. Some artists perform hyperactively under the influence of drugs.' In the process, the growth of Zimdancehall is significantly fanned.

In the early 2000s, some people in the country avoided watching ZTV and listening to local radio stations where propaganda jingles were played every 30 minutes. They acquired free to air digital satellite decoders popularly known as Phillibao and Wizztech to access free to air international channels. At the time, the national broadcaster was still using analogue technology. Phillibao and Wizztech decoders exposed viewers to genres such as dancehall which were not available on the local broadcast channels.

Many upcoming artists in Zimbabwe are now performing *Zimdancehall* music due to a compelling general shift towards the genre. *Zimdancehall* music is evading traditional censorship because home studio production set-ups are informal. Khulekani Moyo, indicated that 'some musicians were silenced on radio for lack of compliance to requirements in terms of either lyrical sensitivity or generosity by tipping DJs/radio presenters with motivational tokens. *Zimdancehall* thrives on online platforms like *Spotify*, mostly, and escape the limitations of censorship and local marketing systems.

Digital technology has contracted the world to a small village. According to Cresswell and Bennett (2015), life is lived on the screen. The era of free channel broadcasting exposes people to channels that play dancehall that feature and inspires the youths. The pomp and flamboyance depicted in the videos clicked with the youths who, apart from getting solace from dancehall, had an opportunity to express themselves through the music. The era was later complemented by the proliferation of home studios as computers became acquirable by some producers. Open view digital platform, *Go TV*, was popular with viewers, but was immediately outlawed in Zimbabwe. The next discussion discusses the merits that have been realised through the use of digital recording technology.

11. Merits of digital recording technology

Digital technology has brought several advantages to the recording industry. Unlike in the analogue era where sessions called for a full band's flawless live performance for a successful recording, digital technology allows for recordings of individual tracks either guided by a given metronome tempo or without. The advantage is that one person can play many instrumental tracks which make up the song without a full band. Whereas during the analogue era a recording endeavour would collapse if band members failed to turn up or made mistakes, in the digital technology era, this is no longer a problem. Frustrating auditions which were characteristic of analogue producers are now a thing of the past.

Clive Mukundu, Musician and Producer at Monolio studio, noted that 'Monolio Studio recorded many overseas musician's online courtesy of digital

technology coupled with internet possibilities.' This approach accommodates people physically residing in different geographical locales. It brings together aspects from different cultures into the recording which otherwise would have not been possible using analogue technology. It enhances cultural diffusionism since the traits of participants are directly expressed within the project. Each person has a motif bank within themselves on which they rely whenever they perform.

In written or spoken words, there is vocabulary that is associated with a given individual writer or speaker (personal choice of vocabulary). Likewise, with musical instruments, it is possible to tell who is playing without seeing them because of motifs with which the instrumentalist is identified with. The researchers concur with this assertion as performers, and understand that it is through exposure and experience that a musician's aptitude is shaped.

A genre is created from a musician's imagination and stimulation in his/her 'sound bank' then nourished by immersion, and involvement with society, culture, performers and technology. Technology comes in to enrich ideas through the addition of a wide range of sound effects. The malleability of sequencing processes used help to reproduce, and embellish imagination. It also provides requisite storage medium and format. Emmanuel Motsi, Musician and band leader of Zimreggastra, said: 'the digital era storage soft copies like MP3, WMA and WAV enable musicians to market themselves widely on a variety of online platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Spotify*, *WhatsApp* and *YouTube*. These online platforms help musicians shape their work by informing them about trends originating elsewhere so that they adopt attributes which enhance their international acceptance.'

Clive Mukundu highlighted one more benefit of digital technology which is the fact that he creates a bank of drum pattern loops which he constructs using real drummers for various local genres. These drum pattern loops can be used later in various recordings done without a drummer. These loops are user friendly in that they can be adjusted in tempo to suit the tempi of each recording at each given time. The loops vary from *Rhumba, Sungura, Mhande, Jiti, Jerusarema,* and *Reggae*. Another strength of the loops is that they are customised to suit local music whose rhythms are largely not represented in default pre-sets found in most DAW built-in loops. Using a DAW, a loop can be dropped into a track then stretched or contracted to suit the chosen tempo so a recording can ensue. Signal processing tools can then be applied to achieve intended sonic characteristics of subsequent sound output.

The researchers observed that digital recording is more user friendly than analogue recording in that it is flexible, and can be manipulated. Mixing, and mastering, processes such as cleaning, dynamics, editing, EQ, FX and stereo imaging can easily be undone or redone through the click of a button. There are instances where mistakes occur during singing or instrument playing resulting in wrong notes. Apart from pitch correction done by several plugins, a note can be targeted within the given track, and adjusted in pitch or duration, notwithstanding the traditional delete and redo option. Alternatively, if the note is repeated somewhere in the phrasing, the correctly played note can be duplicated, and then cut and pasted in a position to replace the wrongly done one. This is made easy by the fact that most digital recordings follow a metronome tempo guide; hence, notes falling within recurring phrases carry close resemblance enough to substitute each other with no glaring difference. Moreover, repeated phrases can be looped through the intended duration such that a musician or sequencer may just do one phrase and loop it over until the intended period or length is covered.

Because technology continues to move to greater heights, studio owners need to upgrade their equipment from time to time. Norman Tapambwa,

musician and producer at Live Sound Studio International, observed that:

> digital technology is advantageous because unlike in analogue where replacement is imperative when technologies change, digital systems simply call for software upgrading. Digital recording equipment is relatively affordable. Moreover, it is conducive for use in the home for the equipment occupies little space. This also lessens transport requirements when the need arises to relocate, apart from promoting mobility.

The equipment can be moved to places with more clients from time to time. Forward Mazuruse, musician and producer, stated that:

> in digital technology, merit comes with Autotune, a plug-in that corrects pitch and enhances the voice of a musician. He says old school musicians continue to cling on to traditional ways of recording where too little or no enhancement is applied, for instance to voices. Remaining in the past militates against the realization of the full potential of an artist's works. While celebrated musicians like Oliver Mtukudzi were famous, their voices were not quite as good as they would have been with the necessary enhancement applications found in digital technology, and also trending in popular, and contemporary genres like Hip hop and *Zimdancehall*.

Khulekani Moyo, echoed the same sentiments and indicated that the rise of young producers who experiment with, and bring novelty, to musical sounds. On platforms such as ZIMA, some awards are scooped by young home studio producers while renowned professional studio producers are hardly considered. Moyo (2016), Kudita (2020) and Shumba (2020) concur that Oskid, who produces dancehall artists such as Winky D, has won the producer of the year award more than once despite being a 'new kid' on the block.

Another advantage of digital technology is that synchronising can be done manually because individual tracks, or ranges within a track, can be highlighted for relocation or volume adjustment. A tool like range selection in Cubase can be used to highlight and drag a range either within a track, or range of tracks to correctly position or to duplicate the section. The same tool can be used to combine segments within a track to either move them at once or to duplicate the selected range. It makes loop construction easy to deal with in respect of phrase duplication.

When track write mode is engaged, the signal can be treated with different sound effects at various points including volume levels as well as panning. In automation mode, a sound event is instructed to follow a prescribed trajectory of transformations as designed at various points of a given track. Moreover, trending software packages make it possible to utilise multiple approaches in dealing with notes. These include the note typing mode in which software like Mixcraft, which enables the musician to use a laptop keyboard to play musical notes using selected electric keyboard utilities such as pitch bend and transposition.

Digital tracks can be viewed for editing in piano roll or staff notation modes where utilities like pencil and eraser are available for creating and adjusting notes. This accommodates users from different orientations to utilise their theoretical knowledge for the best possible musical arrangements. Notes can be entered by use of a pencil tool, and preferred duration can be selected to suit the intended rhythm. Intermittent loudness can be constructed by tweaking the control utilities in the piano roll mode as intended for the final sound output.

There is also a facility to quantize notes, that is, to let the software automatically place the notes at the correct positions according to the selected time signature to match the tempo, and intended rhythm. The artificial laying of notes is very perfect. Mixcraft includes the 'humanise' option in the MIDI editing menu to randomise the flow of notes and disguise them to feel like they were played from a live human performance. This demonstrates how

digital technology attempts to emulate the human aspect with regards to music performance. The utility helps conceal the excessive precision of software note placement that tends to take away the natural feel of the music. When 'humanised,' some notes will fall slightly before or after while others occur precisely on time to imitate a real human performance.

12. Convergence of analogue and digital technologies

The study observed that *Sungura* drumming is slowly being taken over by the loop approach. Forward Mazuruse, stated that 'instead of hiring a drummer, I do better with constructing drum loops in the DAW.' Apart from being economic by limiting hired labour, it saves him from grappling with cable glitches, and humming noises. As such, he can maximise his volume without the fear of cable electrostatic and magnetic interferences. In addition to creating a clean drum signal, he emphasised the advantage of being able to create drum loops that otherwise would not be playable humanly. Several artists, especially gospel musicians have since embraced digital drumming.

Some prominent *Sungura* artists have since adopted loop-based drumming as well as MIDI instrumentation. However, it should be noted that loop percussion takes away some amount of 'life' and warmth from the music.

While significant efforts are being made to manipulate the DAW to bring out tenets of local genres like *Sungura*, it by default, is customised to foreign genres whose rhythms and sometimes tones run parallel to local expectations.

Clive Mukundu says that: 'genres like *Sungura* and *Mbira* are highly dependent on the hi-hat for their quintessential definition. It is best to use loops created during live recordings for these particular genres to retain richness of rhythm texture. Characteristically, the tempo is rigid, and the humanly feel is absent.' Although notes can be quantised or humanised, a glaring inconsistency with conventional standards can always be heard in digitally made *Sungura* and *Mbira* music. Despite these shortcomings, musicians go on to make recordings with digital drumming. This may result from lack of a 'musical ear' compounded by the autonomy brought by digital technology.

13. The place of chanters

Competition for space has also resulted from the proliferation of genres. The olden genres are now facing some competition from newer genres in that the larger part of music consumption is tilting towards the youths who have more disposable time and are numerous. Youths readily embrace current trends, trending fashions and styles. They are neither worried about sustaining rooted culture nor maintaining identity. They may be easily swept by foreign styles, and genres like dancehall, and hip hop, for instance. For example, there have been clashes between *Sungura* and *Zimdancehall* musicians in a bid to prove who is superior to the other.

The power of *Zimdancehall,* like any other dancehall music, lies within a musician's ability to engage the audience, and make them active participants in the performance. Chanting has always characterised *Rhumba* and *Kanindo* but *Sungura* musicians seldom chanted. Because of competition from *Zimdancehall*, more *Sungura* musicians use chants. *Zimdancehall* artists' ability to make the crowds sing along has prompted a heightened engagement of chanters in the *Sungura*. Popular *Sungura* bands Orchestra Mberikwazvo

and Utakataka Express engaged Jonas Kasamba and Shiga Shiga as chanters. As a result, chanting has since cascaded down the entire *Sungura* fraternity, and has now become an attribute of the genre.

14. Conclusion

The Zimbabwe recording industry had more personnel during the analogue than the digital era. The A&R office scouted for talent, and the producer oversaw the recording process. The engineer presided over the technical process and the musicians originated the sound with some producer input. *Sungura* music rose to be dominant and other genres like *Chimurenga,* Afro-fusion, and Afro-jazz occupied little space in the trending recordings. Musicians in the analogue era enjoyed 'free' recording and marketing of their music despite getting unsatisfactory percentages of royalty dividends.

Analogue systems produced warm music which lasted decades of unfading listenership. The vinyl era had minimal to no piracy at all. Although, during the analogue period, people could copy audio on blank cassettes, piracy was minimal because the quality of sound deteriorated rapidly each time it was transferred to other mediums.

However, music is culture, and culture is dynamic. Technological changes often dictate how things are to be done. Digital technology undid the monopoly of the analogue recording industry and brought unlimited recording possibilities. It brought flexible mobility and ubiquity. It enabled music to be made by people who may not be unskilled to play musical instruments. Simple manipulation of sound banks or music typing simulate real instruments. This has promoted new genres like *Zimdancehall*, R n' B and hip hop in Zimbabwe. Moreover, it has opened employment opportunities as it is less expensive to establish a digital studio. This is because it requires less space and the equipment is affordable; digital technology has opened unending possibilities. Other genres have adopted digital utilities and evolved. The autonomy of musicians is now more pronounced in the digital era than before.

References

Bhattacherjee, A. 2012. Social science research: Principles, methods, and practices. Textbooks Collection. Book 3. [Online] Available from https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3 [Accessed 10/10/20]

Boyd, A. 2001. *Broadcast journalism: Techniques of radio and television news*. 5th Ed London: Focal Press.

Chitando, E. 2002. Review essay: Music in Zimbabwe. *Zambezia*, 29(1): 82-91.

Cresswell, A. J. and Bennett, R. J. 2015. *The digital evolution of Live Music*. London: Chandos Publishing.

Dube, C. 1996. The changing context of African music performance in Zimbabwe. *Zambezia*. 23 (2): 99-120.

Galletta, A. 2013. *Mastering the semi-structured Interview and beyond*. New York University Press: London.

Gondo, B. 2012. The death of the Zimbabwean music record company: The

rise of the independent artist. *Technology Zimbabwe,* 17 May 2012.

Kudita, A. (2020) Zim music awards held after a long hiatus. [Online] *Zimbabwe Independent*. Available from https://www.theindependent.co.zw [Accessed 10/10/20]

Leyshon, A. 2009. The software slump? Digital democratization of technology, and the decline of the recording studio sector within the musical economy. *Environment and Planning* 41: 1309-1331.

Lena, J. C. and Peterson, R. A. 2008. Classification as culture: Types and trajectories of music genres. *American sociological review*, *73*(5): 697-718.

Lwanda, J. and Kanjo, C. 2013. Computers, culture and music: The history of the recording industry in Malawi. *The Society of Malawi Journal 66*(1) :23-42.

Makwenda, J. 2005. *Zimbabwe township music.* Harare: Story Time Promotions.

Medosch, A. 2005. Technological determinism in media Art. Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of Sussex, Sussex, England.

Moyo, A. 2016. *Nomadic Oskid finds new home*. The Sunday Mail. Available from https://www.sundaymail.co.zw [Accessed 10/10/20].

Mugari, Z.E. 2016. Riding the riddim culture: Rethinking the culture Industry Thesis in Economic and Aesthetic production of Zimdancehall music. *The Dyke Journal Special Issue:* 82-99.

Muranda, R. & Maguraushe, W. 2014. Sungura music's development in Zimbabwe: The emergency of trendsetters, emulators and copycats. *The Journal of Music and Meaning*. 12(2):44-62.

Muranda, R. 2021. Towards a sustainable music industry in the backdrop of music piracy in Zimbabwe. Nyawo, V. Z. and Ngoshi, H. T. (eds.) Nyawo in *Value addition and economic sustainability: multi-disciplinary perspectives* (pp. 229-244). Midlands State University Press & Africa Institute for Culture, Peace, Dialogue & Tolerance Studies: Harare

Niaah, S. S. 2008. A common space: Dancehall, Kwaito, and the Mapping of the world music and performance. *The World of Music* 50(2):35-50.

Perman, T. 2015. A Tale of two Mbiras. African Music, *Journal of the International Library of African Music, 10*(1):102-125.

Pietilä, T. 2015. *Contracts, Patronage and Mediation the Articulation of Global and Local in the South African Recording Industry.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Scannell, P. 2001. Music, radio and the record business in Zimbabwe today. *Popular music*, *20* (1): 13-27.

Shumba, A. 2020. *Zimbabwe Music Awards 2020: All the winners*. Music Africa. [Online] Available from musicafrica.net [Accessed 10/10/20]

Sibanda, M. 2012. "Zimbabwe's Music Industry is Dying Slowly". *Daily News,* 4 April 2012.

Stone, R. M. 2015. *Theory for Ethnomusicology*. London: Routledge.

Thaker, H. (2021) History of the sound recording technology [Online] Available from https://www.academia.edu/37869624/ [Accessed 21/07/21]

Turino, T. 2010. The Mbira, Worldbeat, and International Imagination. *The World of Music*, 52 (1/3), pp. 171-192 [Online] available from https://www.jstor.org/stable/41700030 [Accessed 20-06-2019]

Veblen, T. 1994 [1915]. Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution. New York: Macmillan. Reprinted in Veblen (1994). *The Collected Works of Thorstein Veblen, Vol. 4*. London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press.

Vhori, E. 2012. *Record Companies Battle Piracy*. ZARI General Meeting Held in Msasa, Harare, 12 April 2012.

Zindi, F. 2015. The History of Zimbabwe's Recording Industry. *Music in Africa*. [Online] Available from https://www.musicinafrica.net [Accessed 24/02/19]

Interviews

Chamba, O. 2020. *Personal Interview*, KN Studios, Harare.

Kunenyati, K. 2020. Personal Interview, Kasongo Band, Chitungwiza.

Mareva, W. 2021. Personal Interview, Bronte Hotel, Harare.

Mazuruse, F. 2021. Personal Interview, Music for Development Studio, Harare.

Motsi, E. 2020. Personal Interview, Transit Crew, Online Harare.

Moyo, J. 2021. Personal Interview, Devera Ngwena Jazz Band, Online Masvingo.

Moyo. K. F. 2020. Personal Interview, GM Records, Gweru.

Mukundu, C. 2021. Personal Interview, Monolio Studio, Harare.

Ndlovu, J. 2021. Personal Interview, Trutone Studios, Harare.
Nyamasvisva, W. 2021. Personal Interview, Harare.

Nyamhondera, B. 2021. Personal Interview, Diamond Studios, Harare.

Tapambwa, N. 2020. Personal Interview, Live Sound Studio International, Chitungwiza.