You Alone: Gospel Music Production of Omaraye Regina in Congrat Recording Studio, Ughelli, Delta State.

By

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Abstract

The study focused on You Alone: Gospel music production of Omaraye Regina in Congrat Recording Studio Ughelli, Delta State, Nigeria "You Alone" stands as a testament to the seamless fusion of analog and digital elements within the realm of gospel music production. This study encapsulates the essence of music creation, highlighting its innovative approach and thematic richness. The production begins with the timeless glamour of analog instrumentation. Rooted in gospel music traditions, the production features resonant piano chords, and emotive vocal performances. However, "You Alone" transcends mere tradition by embracing the possibilities of analog-digital technology. The general objective of this study is to produce gospel music of Omaraye Regina titled You Alone using anolog-digital technology in Congrat Recording Studio. The theory employed for this study is the creative process theory. This study adopts a case study expository research design method as a qualitative research approach using both primary and secondary sources in the collection of data. The findings from the study highlights that the production of music is a meticulous process of pre-production, actual production and post-production which are essential in the production of qualitative music. The research found that, recording techniques such as Auto-Tune, limiter, compressor and virtual instruments were employed and are integral parts of the production processes. In conclusion, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of contemporary gospel music production and effective use of analog and digital technologies. The study recommends equipment maintenance, use project management tools,

enhance communication, explore hybrid technologies, provide training, update acoustic treatment, and document best practices.

Keywords: Music production, Gospel music, Recording studio, Analog music, Digital Music

Introduction

Music production involves the creation of music using recording production technology, encompassing the entire process of composing, capturing, manipulating, and preserving audio recordings. This process consists of several stages, including composition, recording, editing, mixing, and mastering, each requiring technical expertise and artistic insight. In contemporary music production, digital audio workstations (DAWs), synthesizers, and audio effects play a crucial role, in blending analog and digital technologies to achieve the desired sound. These effects have become essential tools for producers, allowing them to shape and refine recordings while collaborating with artists and sound engineers to ensure the final product meets professional and commercial standards.

Music production currently, integrates analog techniques with digital technology, enhancing flexibility, efficiency, and overall production quality. The deployment of technology is crucial in music production. According to Efurhievwe (2020), technology enhances music production significantly… The music industry experiences a paradigm shift due to the use of technology in music production. In this approach, producers integrate traditional analog devices (synthesizers, effects units, and drum machines) with modern digital tools (computers, software synthesizers) and digital audio workstations (DAWs) for qualitative music. These tools allow for a wide variety of creative possibilities, combining the warm sound and character of analog sound with the flexibility and suitability of digital technology.

Gospel music, deeply rooted in the African American religious experience, is known for its spiritual themes and passionate delivery. Unlike other genres, gospel production incorporates a fusion of technological, cultural, and musical elements. The process begins with songwriting and arrangement, often blending

contemporary influences with traditional sacred songs and spirituals. A key feature of gospel music production is the emphasis on call-and-response patterns and repetitive choruses, which are designed to engage listeners and evoke a spiritual response. This structural approach originates from the oral traditions of African American worship services, where congregational participation plays a vital role in the musical experience.

Over the years, the methods of recording gospel music have evolved significantly. In the past, live recordings of church services were commonly used to capture the authenticity and intensity of performances, effectively conveying the spiritual atmosphere of gospel music. However, modern productions incorporate a variety of traditional instrumentations and choruses to add harmonic depth, aiming to replicate the powerful energy of live performances while utilizing advanced recording technology. Instruments such as the piano, organ, and tambourine contribute to a more polished and refined sound. Additionally, contemporary gospel music expands its instrumentation to include electric guitars, synthesizers, and other modern elements, ensuring that it remains spiritually impactful while also appealing to a broader audience.

In gospel music production, producers play a crucial role in overseeing both the creative direction and technical aspects of the recording process. Their work ensures that the music effectively conveys its intended emotional and spiritual messages. Collaborating closely with artists, producers help shape the overall production by blending spiritual expression, technological innovation, and musical tradition. They ensure that the final composition aligns with the message and musical style of gospel music, making it resonate deeply with listeners. In the studio, producers work alongside artists and sound engineers, guiding the recording, mixing, and mastering processes to achieve the desired sound and quality.

Omaraye Regina began her music career at the age of 18 at Saint Paul Anglican Church, Ekiugbo, Ughelli, Delta State, during weekly prayer meetings held every Wednesday. Her passion for music and exceptional singing ability quickly earned her the opportunity to sing at these weekly meetings regularly. She is also a chorister at All Saints Cathedral, Ughelli. Omaraye Regina later joined a group

within the Anglican Church called the Anglican Adam Preaching Society (A.A.P.S), where she met Evangelist Jerry Ekpekuro, a musical band leader, in 1997. She served musically with Evangelist Jerry Ekpekuro's band for two years before relocating to another vibrant band led by Evangelist Eruemuesiri Quincy Tebite, known as *Tisio Tisio*, in 1999. She continues to serve and faithfully shares her musical expertise with this band to date. Omaraye Regina attends the College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, from 2007 to 2009, where she obtains her National Certificate in Education (N.C.E) in music. Following her education, she returns to stage performance.

This study on the gospel music production of Omaraye Regina in Congrat Recording Studio, Ughelli, is a true representation of gospel analog-digital production. The recording incorporates contemporary beat techniques to produce quality music. The study features live instrumentation, providing the music with a rich, organic texture reminiscent of ancient gospel recordings. It also includes percussion, resonant guitar strums, and piano chords. The overall sound is further enhanced by subtle digital elements such as well-executed sound effects and precise mixing using audio digital workstation software installed on a computer, adding depth and clarity to the music.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to produce gospel music of Omaraye Regina titled "You Alone" using analog-digital technology in Congrat recording studio, Ughelli, Delta State.

The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. explain the processes involved in gospel music production of Omaraye Regina using analog-digital music technology.
2. identify the techniques employed in recording gospel music artiste.
3. examine the state-of-the-art technology employed in Congrat recording studio.
4. discuss the challenges in recording the artists using analog-digital facilities in Congrat recording studio.

Literature Review

Concept of Music Production

This study adopts the conceptual framework of music production by Mellonee V. Burnim (2006). The concept highlights the interplay between historical development, essential elements of music production, the role of the producer, and technological advances. Music production is a comprehensive process involving the creation, enhancement, and completion of musical works. It covers a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from initial composition and arrangement to recording, mixing, and mastering. The music producer plays a crucial role in shaping the sound and artistic direction of a musical project.

Concept of Gospel Music

Gospel music, deeply rooted in Christian traditions, is distinguished by its vocal harmonies, powerful lyrics, and origins in African American religious experiences. This genre has evolved, influenced by cultural, social, and musical changes. Initially stemming from African American spirituals, gospel music was significantly shaped by pioneers like Thomas A. Dorsey, who infused blues elements into sacred music. It played a vital role during the Civil Rights Movement, serving as an anthem of hope and unity. Today, gospel music continues to thrive, blending traditional sounds with contemporary influences from hip-hop, pop, reggae and rock, thus reaching a broader audience while maintaining its core message of faith and spirituality (Boyd, 2004). Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to inspire and uplift through its rich musicality and spiritual depth.

Music Recording Studio

A music recording studio is a dedicated space for producing, recording, and mixing audio. It generally includes several key areas: the control room, live room, and isolation booths. The control room contains the mixing console, digital audio workstations (DAWs), and other crucial equipment, allowing sound engineers to manipulate and oversee audio. The live room, where musicians perform, is acoustically treated to reduce reflections and external noise, ensuring superior recordings. Soundproof environments are achieved by isolating booth for recording individual vocals or instruments without any interference. Effective acoustic treatment is essential, using materials like bass traps and diffusers to

manage sound reflections and reverberation, thus achieving clear and precise audio (Newell, 2013).

Recording studios are outfitted with various tools necessary for capturing and shaping sound, such as microphones, preamplifiers, mixing consoles, and studio monitors. Microphones come in different types, including dynamic, condenser, and ribbon, each suitable for specific recording tasks (Owsinski, 2013). Preamplifiers amplify microphone signals to usable levels while maintaining sound quality. Mixing consoles are the central point for audio signal management which allows precise adjustments of gain levels, panning, and effects. DAWs like Pro Tools and Logic Pro provide extensive capabilities for recording, editing, and mixing audio. Studio monitors are designed for accurate sound reproduction, offering a flat frequency response to ensure engineers hear the true sound of the recording. These components, combined with the expertise of audio engineers, result in high-quality recordings (White, 2014).

Analog Recording

Analog recording is a classic method of capturing sound, utilizing the continuous representation of audio signals as physical variations on media like magnetic tape or vinyl records. This method involves converting sound waves into electrical signals via microphones, which are then recorded onto tape through magnetic induction. Analog recording is renowned for its warm and natural sound quality, which many audio engineers and musicians prefer over digital recordings (Moylan, 2014). The analog format captures the entire sound wave, offering a rich and detailed audio experience. However, it also introduces noise and distortion, which can be perceived as either imperfections or desirable traits, depending on the context (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2012).

Equipment used in analog recording includes tape recorders, analog mixers, and various outboard gear such as compressors and equalizers. Tape recorders are especially critical in this process, as they capture the audio signal and contribute to the sound's unique texture through tape saturation and harmonic distortion (Huber & Runstein, 2013). Despite the prevalence of digital recording technologies in modern music production, analog recording is still cherished for its distinctive sound qualities and its ability to capture performance nuances. Most

contemporary studios employs analog and digital equipment to benefit from both technologies, thereby creating a hybrid recording environment that combines the warmth of analog with the precision of digital.

Digital Recording

Digital recording is a contemporary method of capturing and storing audio signals as digital data, converting sound waves into numerical values. This process involves using an analog-to-digital converter (ADC) to sample audio at a specific rate and bit depth, creating a digital representation of the sound. A key benefit of digital recording is its ability to provide high fidelity and clarity while being resistant to noise and degradation over time (Rumsey & McCormick, 2014). Digital audio can be edited, manipulated, and copied without quality loss, making it incredibly versatile for music production and other audio applications (Corey, 2016).

Digital recording utilizes tools such as digital audio workstations (DAWs), audio interfaces, and various software plugins for audio processing and editing. Digital audio workstation like Pro Tools, Ableton Live, and Logic Pro offering extensive capabilities for recording, editing, mixing, and mastering audio. Audio interfaces act as the link between analog and digital, converting analog signals from microphones and instruments into digital data for DAW processing. Additionally, digital recording enables non-destructive editing, allowing changes without permanently altering the original recordings, offering greater flexibility and creative control for producers and engineers (Huber & Runstein, 2013). Despite the popularity of digital recording, some producers mix analog equipment to achieve a blend of warmth and accuracy in their recordings.

Music Recording Production Process

Recording; in the recording phase, the focus is on capturing musical performances. This involves setting up and positioning microphones and other equipment to accurately record vocals, instruments, and other sound sources. The quality of the recording is influenced by microphone choice, placement, and the acoustics of the recording environment. Attention to these details is essential for achieving clarity and high fidelity in the recordings (Gibson, 2011). Engineers work to optimize

sound capture by adjusting equipment settings and monitoring levels to prevent distortion and ensure the performance is faithfully recorded.

Mixing; following the recording phase, mixing involves combining and balancing the various tracks to produce a cohesive audio piece. This stage includes adjusting the levels of different elements, positioning sounds in the stereo field, and applying equalization (EQ) to enhance or correct frequencies. Effects like reverb and delay are added to create a sense of space and depth in the mix (Owsinski, 2017). Mixing aims to blend all elements harmoniously, ensuring that the final sound aligns with the artistic intent of the project. This stage often involves iterative adjustments and refinements to achieve the desired audio quality (White, 2014). In addition to the music production process is the pre-production, actual production, and postproduction stages.

Pre-production

The pre-production phase is essential in music production, focusing on preparing and planning before the recording begins. This stage involves several important activities to lay a strong foundation for the recording project.

Planning and Preparation; in pre-production, the main objective is to organize and plan the recording sessions. This involves selecting and arranging the musical material, such as songs and compositions. Producers and artists collaborate to define the project's artistic direction and sound, often creating demos to refine these ideas and arrangements. These demos ensure that all elements are well-prepared before entering the studio (Owsinski, 2013).

Studio Setup and Equipment Selection; preparing the recording environment is another crucial part of pre-production. This includes choosing the appropriate recording studio and ensuring it has the necessary equipment and technology. Decisions regarding microphone types, recording gear, and software are made to ensure the studio setup meets the project’s needs and is ready for high-quality audio capture (White, 2014).

Scheduling and budgeting; pre-production also involves scheduling and budgeting, which are vital for managing the logistical aspects of the recording.

This includes planning the recording sessions, coordinating with musicians and engineers, and estimating costs for studio time, equipment, and other resources. Proper scheduling and budgeting help to prevent delays and keep the project on track (Gibson, 2011).

Creative Direction and Rehearsal; finally, establishing the creative direction is a key component of pre-production. This involves discussing the artistic vision, style, and sound of the project in detail. Rehearsals are conducted to ensure that performers are well-prepared and familiar with the material and arrangements, leading to a smoother recording process and improved performance quality (Owsinski, 2017).

Actual Production

The Actual Production phase is a pivotal stage in music production where recording, editing, and assembling the musical material occur. This phase is essential for transforming initial concepts into a final audio product.

Recording; the recording process is central to this phase, involving the capture of musical performances by musicians and vocalists. This requires a meticulous setup of microphones and recording gear to ensure optimal audio quality. Engineers focus on fine-tuning levels, experimenting with microphone placements, and managing the acoustics of the recording space to capture the performance with high fidelity (Gibson, 2011). Achieving the best sound often involves multiple takes and close monitoring.

Editing; following recording, the editing process refines the captured audio. This step involves cutting, arranging, and modifying audio segments to improve the continuity and quality of the material. Using Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs), engineers correct timing discrepancies, eliminate unwanted noise, and enhance the recordings. This stage also includes pitch correction and aligning tracks to ensure a cohesive and polished final product (Owsinski, 2017). Effective editing is crucial for achieving the desired sound and adhering to the artistic vision.

Mixing; mixing comes next, where individual tracks are combined into a final stereo or multichannel format. During mixing, engineers adjust track levels,

panning, and equalization to create a balanced and harmonious sound. They also apply effects like reverb, delay, and compression to enhance the mix's overall quality. The aim is to ensure that all elements fit together seamlessly and support the artistic intent of the project (White, 2014). This process often involves several revisions to achieve the perfect sound.

Post-Production

The post-production phase is essential for finalizing and preparing the recorded material for release. This stage involves refining the audio, ensuring consistency, and making the final product ready for distribution. Key activities in this phase include mixing, mastering, and quality control.

Mixing; mixing at this stage involves combining and balancing individual tracks to create a unified sound. Engineers adjust the levels, panning, and equalization of each track, applying effects such as reverb and delay to enhance the overall audio experience. The objective is to ensure that all components of the track work together harmoniously and support the artistic vision of the project (Owsinski, 2017). Mixing also includes creating a stereo or multichannel mix that represents the desired sound and dynamic range of the final product.

Mastering; mastering is the final step where the audio is prepared for distribution across various formats. This process involves making final adjustments, such as equalization, compression, and limiting, to ensure that the audio is consistent and optimized for playback on different devices (White, 2014). Mastering produces the final master copy, which is used for all subsequent copies and formats, including digital downloads, CDs, and vinyl records (Gibson, 2011).

Quality Control; quality control is a vital part of post-production, involving a thorough review of the final master to detect and correct any issues. This includes checking for audio artifacts, ensuring consistent levels across tracks, and confirming that the audio meets industry standards. The aim is to deliver a polished and professional product that meets the expectations of both the artist and the audience (Owsinski, 2017).

Methodology

This study adopts a case study and expository research design using qualitative research approach. The methods offer a comprehensive understanding of the technical dynamics involved in the study. It is a suitable tool for examining the intricate interplay between analog and digital technologies in gospel music production. The researcher (producer) utilizes this design to collect data on experiences, preferences, and perceptions regarding analog-digital gospel music production while interacting with studio professionals at Congrat Recording Studio, Ughelli, Delta State, where the gospel album ''You Alone'' is produced.

In addition to the case study design, this research also incorporates the Expository Research Method to provide a detailed and systematic explanation of the processes, techniques, and challenges associated with analog-digital gospel music production. Expository research is particularly relevant because it aims to clarify and interpret the technical and artistic decisions involved in the production process, making the study not only observational but also explanatory.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note that case studies involve immersive observation and interaction with participants in their natural environment, providing rich qualitative data relevant to the problem under investigation. By integrating the Expository Research Method, this study enhances its analytical depth, ensuring that the findings are not only descriptive but also provide clear insights into how and why certain production techniques and decisions are made. This combination of case study and expository research allows for a thorough exploration of both the practical application and theoretical implications of analog-digital technology in gospel music production.

Discussion of Findings

What are the processes involved in gospel music production?

Findings:

The findings from the producer/researcher outline a well-structured approach to gospel music production, beginning with pre-production, where thorough planning and preparation takes place. This phase includes developing the concept, selecting and arranging of songs, conducting rehearsals, and setting up the necessary paraphernalia to ensure the readiness of its recording. Once songs are

selected based on their emotional and lyrical impact, attention shifts to structuring key musical elements like tempo, rhythm, and key, ensuring the music aligns with the project's overall vision. During the actual production stage, the focus shifts to capture the performances, optimized the recording setup, and using editing and mixing techniques to improve the sound by adjusting levels, applying effects, and blending tracks. In the post-production phase, mastering ensures the final tracks maintain consistency and high quality across playable platforms, with equalization, compression, and volume adjustments being applied to meet professional and industry standards. This process ensures both the artistic vision and technical aspects are carefully managed throughout.

What are the techniques employed in recording gospel music artiste?
Findings:
The findings from the respondents (studio engineer) reveal that gospel music production effectively combines analog and digital techniques to achieve a rich and precise sound. The producer utilizes analog equipment, such as vintage microphones and compressors, to capture the warmth and emotional depth in vocals and instruments, while digital tools like Cubase 12 provide flexibility for editing and sound manipulation. Core elements are recorded in analog to harness their organic qualities, followed by digital processing for mixing and mastering. The choice between analog and digital methods depends on the desired sound character, with analog favoured for its warmth and digital for precision in complex arrangements. Consistency in sound quality is maintained through careful gain staging, signal calibration, and EQ adjustments, ensuring a cohesive final product that blends the best of both technologies

How are the state-of-the-art technology employed in Congrat recording studio?
Findings:
The findings from the respondent (studio manager) about Congrat Recording Studio reveal a diverse array of both analog and digital technologies that enhance gospel music production. Key analog equipment includes mixing consoles for warmth, outboard compressors and equalizers for character and musicality, reverb units for depth, and Shure microphones for capturing vocal nuances. On the digital side, the studio utilizes a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) like Cubase 12 for flexibility in recording and editing, along with audio interfaces for high-

quality sound capture. Additionally, plug-ins, virtual instruments (VSTs), Auto-Tune, MIDI controllers, and high-end studio monitors are employed to ensure polished performances and precise monitoring. This combination of advanced technologies facilitates a high-quality and creatively rich production environment for gospel music.

What are the challenges faced by the producer in Congrat Recording Studio?
Findings:
The findings as the producer/researcher at Congrat Recording Studio, faces several challenges in gospel music production, particularly in integrating analog and digital technologies. Technical compatibility issues complicate synchronization, leading to potential sound quality loss. Balancing creative inspiration with technical precision is a constant struggle, as technical difficulties can disrupt the artistic flow and affect project timelines. Additionally, gospel artists like Omaraye Regina have strong spiritual visions that may not align with available technology or budget constraints, adding pressure to meet both technical and emotional standards. Maintaining consistent audio quality between analog warmth and digital clarity presents another significant hurdle, requiring careful attention to detail. Furthermore, the dual role of researcher and producer complicates the process, as the need for quick creative decisions conflicts with the objectivity required for research, often resulting in personal and professional exhaustion. Overall, these complexities highlight the intricate landscape the producer navigates in achieving high-quality gospel music production. Additionally, was the challenge of power and finance which disrupt rehearsal and recordings severally.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The study on the production of *You Alone* at Congrat Recording Studio provides valuable insights into contemporary gospel music production, emphasizing the effective integration of analog and digital technologies to achieve high-quality sound. While the study highlights the benefits of combining analog mixing consoles and digital audio workstations for a unique blend of warmth and precision, it also identifies challenges such as technical issues, track management difficulties, and creative constraints. These challenges were mitigated through hybrid technologies and acoustic treatment. To enhance future productions, it is

recommended that producers, artists, and studio personnel foster close collaboration to align artistic vision with technical execution. The adoption of robust project management tools can streamline workflows, while investment in state-of-the-art recording equipment will improve sound quality. Additionally, creative constraints can be addressed by encouraging innovative solutions and open communication, while regular maintenance and troubleshooting protocols can minimize technical disruptions. Ultimately, the study underscores modern music production's complexity and adaptability's importance in navigating technological and artistic demands.

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