The Ghanaian music industry: a quarter century of problems

John Collins of Accra examines why Ghanaian music, famed for decades, has not done well in the international 'World Music' scene.

In June 2000 a World Bank report on the African music industry estimated that the "World Music" sector was grossing about $5 billion, or 14 per cent of annual global record/CD sales. One quarter of this figure (that is, $1.25 billion) was the estimated African component. If this last figure is added to the African component of "World Music" royalties (about $220 million a year) it means that annually almost $1.5 billion is being grossed internationally from African and African inspired music.

As Ghana represents 3.6 per cent of the population of Africa its music should potentially be attracting 3.6 per cent of this $1.5 billion - $53 million a year.

However, Ghana is hardly tapping any of this foreign exchange, as African music lovers in Europe, America and Japan are precisely those looking for an alternative to Western techno-pop. They prefer a more rootsy, live format, "unplugged" and non-synthetic African popular music - rather than the computerised and "canned" varieties currently fashionable in Ghana. This explains why - except for some releases of traditional music and old recordings by E.T. Mensah, the Ramblers, Osibisa etc. - CDs of current Ghanaian material are practically absent from the shelves of American, European and Japanese music shops that deal with "World Music".

Indeed, in the 15 years since the World Music label appeared, Ghana has produced no crossovers to the lucrative international World Music charts (the only exception being the 1988 hit of the Pan African Orchestra, Opus One). Music fans abroad prefer the more authentic African sounds of Senegal's Youssou N'Dour, Mali's Salif Keita and Ali Farka Toure, Benin's Angélique Kidjo, Nigeria's Fela Kuti and Congo's Papa Wemba and Kanda Bongo Man - to name a few.

All these have evolved as successful artists by utilising and developing traditional African musical resources and giving live performances on stage in commercial nightspots. The popular music sector in Ghana today hardly has any live bands or live performance venues for that matter and therefore it is impossible to generate the type of local popular music needed for export. In short over the last 25 years the live commercial music sector has all but collapsed.

As is well known, Ghana created the first distinct form of commercial West African popular music called highlife, which goes back brass-band adaha highlife of the 1880s. By the 1920s, British record companies like Zonophone and HMV were putting Ghanaian highlife records on the West African market. When Ghana obtained independence in 1957 Kwame Nkrumah endorsed highlife and other local popular entertainment forms, encouraged the establishment of two music highlife unions and set up government sponsored highlife dance bands, guitar bands and concert parties.

Ghana was also the location of West Africa's first permanent recording studio (Decca in 1948). By the mid-1970s the country had four recording studios and two record pressing plants producing over 500,000 records a year. By then Ghanaian highlife had spread to many African countries and a variant known as Afro-rock, created by the London-based Ghanaian group Osibisa, had a string of hits in Europe long before the World Music explosion.

So in the mid-1970s everything seemed set for the Ghanaian music business to progress. There were scores of nightclubs and dance venues in Accra alone, 30 or more top highlife dance bands, dozens of Ga "cultural groups", 70 or so highlife guitar bands and concert parties, dozens of Afro-rock fusion bands (like Hedzoleh, Basa-Basa, Boombaya, the Big Beasts and Ogystaan and hundreds of school student pop-bands competing at so-called "pop-chains".

However, by the time the international commercial interest in World Music began from the early 1980s a number of setbacks had occurred and have continued to occur that have prevented and are preventing Ghana from capitalising on this potential goldmine of foreign exchange earnings. These include the general economic decline of the country in the late seventies, political upheavals and revolutions, several years of night curfew, over-taxation of the internal music industry and a general governmental blind spot to the commercial potential of local music as a foreign exchange earner (see Box, p. 9).

Owing to military government
corruption during the latter part of the 1970s the country went into economic decline and record production dropped to a quarter of its previous output. Consequently many performing popular artists left the country in a musical "brain drain" and settled in London, Germany and oil-rich Niger. In 1979 one quarter of all registered members of the Ghana Musicians Union (MUSIGA) were out of the country. The coup of 1979 led by Jerry Rawlings and the subsequent short-lived civilian regime of President Hilla Limann did little to improve matters.

Several of the musicians who stayed in Ghana began to go move into the many independent spiritual and Pentecostal churches that were beginning to mushroom in the country and to use popular dance music in worship and for outreach purposes. This trend has become so strong that local gospel now comprises about half of the output of Ghanaian popular music (see article "Gospel Boom" on p. 12).

The PNDC (Provisional National Defence Council), the military government under Rawlings which took over Ghana on December 31, 1981 took some positive action concerning the music and cultural industry - such as decentralising the Arts Council, recognising MUSIGA and preparing the ground for new copyright legislation. At the same time, however, there were between 1982 and 1984 almost two and a half years of night curfew, which drastically curtailed the activities of commercial nightclubs and local highlife bands and concert parties (local comic opera groups) bands. As bands were grounded some musicians became interested in the disco style of "burguer highlife" style that used keyboard synthesisers and drum-machines and was being brought to Ghana by Ghanaian musicians resident in Germany (particularly Hamburg).

In retrospect, the night curfew can be seen as a watershed for Ghanaian popular entertainment. Prior to the curfew popular music was mainly performed and recorded by live bands and concert parties, afterwards it became more the computer studio and music-TV variety.

After the curfew was lifted in 1984 the open-air nightclubs were invaded by dozens of mobile discos or "spinners" who had previously operated in small discotheques. With their low entrance charges they soon took over the dance venues from live bands as their "spinning" equipment was cheaper to buy and operate than that of the larger highlife and concert bands. At the same time as the spinners were taking over the dance clubs, disco-influenced "burguer-highlife" became all the rage with the Ghanaian youth and new digital studios sprang up to cater for this music. And in the wake of burguer highlife has come "hip-life" (i.e. hip-hop plus highlife) that involves the artist rapping in a local language over a studio-made backing track.

All these new "techno-pop" styles (i.e. burguer-highlife and hip-life) have cut back on musicians and rather employ an engineer who programmes drum machines, midi-systems and keyboard synthesisers. Indeed they are "one-man" bands that have made live drummers and horn players unemployed. Furthermore the singers of these new local "techno styles", particularly hiplife, do not perform to audiences with a live band, but rather mime or "lip-synch" to pre-recorded backing tracks. Besides the fact that they make many local musicians unemployed, another problem with this new Ghanaian techno-pop is that, as mentioned before, it is practically impossible to export to the lucrative World Music market.

Because of the three million Ghanaians

Ghana government blind spots on the music industry

• In the 1970s and 1980s culture was part of the Ministry of Tourism and then the Ministry of Education. When finally it was given a separate status in the late 1980s it was demoted from a full Ministry to a National Commission on Culture. From 1992, when PNDC cabinet member Mohammed Ben Abdullah left the directorship of the NCC, this organisation has never had cabinet representation and so is often not consulted on important national decisions.

• In the late 1980s the school syllabus was restructured so as to make it more technical and related to the practical needs of the country. Unfortunately, in the process music as an independent subject was dropped in Junior Secondary Schools and so can only be taught alongside dance, drama and cultural studies (which is often not possible). For the Senior Secondary Schools music was demoted from a core subject to an optional one and as a result music lessons in many S.S. Schools has been dropped altogether. At the prestigious Achimota Secondary School, for instance, the number of music teachers dropped from 11 to three.

• The performing arts did not feature at all in the Vision 2020 policy that the NDC (National Democratic Congress) government - Rawlings' civilian government that followed the military PNDC one - hoped would raise Ghana to a middle income level nation by the year 2020.

• The Internal Revenue Service allows no income tax waiver or reduction on companies that are prepared to sponsor cultural and artistic events.

The local music industry did not feature at all in the African/African-American Summit in Accra in 1999 that attracted Jesse Jackson and many African-American businessmen who came to explore joint projects with Ghanaians. That the music and entertainment industry was not officially discussed is surprising, considering that this industry is one of the biggest in the United States and that the US is currently going through a World Music/Afro-pop boom. Indeed, over the last seven years the World Music sector has been one of the fastest growing sectors of the American music industry.

• In June 2000 the World Bank had a meeting in Washington (which I attended) to discuss the possibility of the World Bank diverting some of its annual $300 million allocation for culture to the music industry of six African countries. This got the go-ahead of the World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, with the assurance that Ghana would be the first recipient. But when the World Bank representative in Ghana, Peter Harrold, studied the fine print of the current agreement between the World Bank and Ghana he noticed that there was no clause in it for cultural aid or loans. So World Bank monies could not be sent to Ghana and instead went to Senegal which got the first instalment of $15 million. I am sure that this omission in the Ghanaian agreement with the World Bank is a result of culture not being represented at ministerial and Cabinet level. It can of course be easily rectified.

John Collins
Ghanaian music: the way forward

John Collins suggests ways in which the Ghanaian music industry could be encouraged and helped by the government

It is obvious today that live format and indigenous oriented African dance music is now an exportable commodity that could attract up to $53 million a year from sales and royalties for the Ghanaian music industry. Furthermore a vibrant live popular music scene will increase foreign exchange earnings from foreign tourism that now grosses $350 million per year (Ghana’s third biggest foreign export earner), as tourists spend 10 per cent of their foreign currency spending in Ghana on entertainment. There are an estimated 50,000 professional and semi-professional musicians in Ghana (including pop, highlife and gospel artists as well as members of folkloric and “cultural” bands that perform on stage and hotels, etc), and thus boosting the music industry would play a role in governmental poverty reduction strategies.

The most important move the government could make is to institute a minimum five-year tax holiday for the Ghanaian music and entertainment industry. This is equivalent to the tax/duty concessions given to anyone starting up a commercial agriculture business in the country that is oriented to non-traditional exports. If this sort of tax holiday was extended to the music and entertainment sector it would encourage the re-surfacing of live popular bands and nightclub that cater for them as well as encouraging the investment of private businesses into the artistic sector.

Money lost to the Ministry of Internal Revenue (the cedi equivalent of about $5 million a year) would ultimately be recovered in foreign exchange from the export of live (as opposed to computerised and canned) Ghanaian popular music on the World Music market, which as mentioned earlier is potentially as much as $53 million a year.

Furthermore there is also an invisible musical import of foreign exchange through tourism. Everyone has heard of eco-tourism; but in Ghana culture also pulls in tourists who spend an estimated $35 million (10 per cent) of their foreign exchange on entertainment and recreation. At the moment many foreign tourists who go to Ghana complain about the lack of live music and live music venues. As a result Ghana is losing some tourists who prefer to go to countries that have a high World Music profile and have a strong live popular music nightlife scene, such as Senegal and Mali. Enhancing the live music and entertainment sector would thus increase the number of foreign tourists (as well as film-makers, music journalists and artists) coming to Ghana to spend foreign exchange.

The government could also consider putting a tax waiver on private businesses that sponsor artistic events - a move that they are currently considering in the area of sports. This would be an important move as it is difficult to get private businesses to invest in the Ghanaian music industry. It must be noted here that unlike in Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire, no Ghanaian musician has ever been able to become wealthy enough from income generated from music purely inside the country to build a house, nightclub or recording studio. Those few who have made it financially (like Osibisa, Ameye Dede, Kwadwo Aswiti, Daddy Lumba) have done

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The great Ghanaian highlife king E.T. Mensah

living overseas many top burgher-highlife and hip-life musicians are able to go abroad to play for them, make flashy and glamorous music videos whilst there and return with dollars and euros in their pockets. The impression is thus given to Ghanaian youth at home that these touring techno-pop artists have become international super-stars. Their shows are, however, actually patronised by the Ghanaians living abroad rather than whites. And the music of these Ghanaian artists hardly crosses over to the international World Music market at all as foreigners - World Music lovers - will only pay hard cash for what they consider the "authentic" sounds of Africa. That is, music that is folksy and acoustic and has a live feel, or is based on African dance rhythms.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with what these touring Ghanaian techno-pop artists are doing in playing abroad - except that in Ghana they are inadvertently sending a message to the young aspiring artists that they too can make it internationally with computerised Ghanaian techno-music. This creates a negative feed back loop in Ghana that encourages a further move by young artists and music fans away from using traditional musical resources and towards the computer artificiality that is so fashionable in music-making in Ghana at the moment.

What Ghana rather needs are some positive role models for the youth, equivalent to Senegal’s Youssou N'Dour or Mali’s Salif Keita, whose modern use of traditional African musical and rhythmic resources both makes them commercially successful abroad and is putting African music into the world limelight. Unfortunately, right now in Ghana there are no internationally recognised stars who can provide a similar message to Ghanaian youth: that they too can obtain money and success through indigenous-based and live-format music for the international and World Music market.

Ghana once had such a positive role model way back in the 1970s, in the form of Osibisa whose creative and contemporary use of traditional African resources triggered off numerous other local Afro-rock bands. But the World Music commercial sector did not then exist. Now that World Music is firmly on the international map, it is ironic that it is not Ghana, but rather other African countries that are producing globally successful bands equivalent to Osibisa.
Any proposed taxation of the local churches should not include their music sector, as for the last 15 or 20 years the churches have kept many highlife musicians going and have trained a new generation of instrumentalists and singers. With the five-year tax holiday suggested, the government could rather encourage church bands and their numerous musicians to find regular employment in the commercial sector also. Hopefully this would start a trend following a precedent established in the USA when, during the 1950s and 1960s, the “hot” gospel music of the African American churches went secular. This helped create money-generating commercial doo-wop and soul music that in turn laid the foundation for funk, disco, hip-hop and rap music.

Another way of boosting the Ghanaian music industry is to upgrade music in the secondary school syllabus. Until the late 1980s a large number of Ghana's top musicians passed through school bands. However, with the downgrading of music in the Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School curriculum (see p. 9) a whole generation of urban youth has grown up who cannot play instruments and who for entertainment purposes mainly watch or listen to computerised techno-pop, music-videos and lip-synched performances. They are therefore unfamiliar with live popular band instruments and live performances which are an absolute prerequisite for the sort of music that is exportable to the World Music market. One way to reverse the current trend away from live popular is to reinstate music in Ghanaian schools. Furthermore, funds should be made available for band instruments and recording equipment to be introduced into the schools; this would be invaluable in teaching children to produce their own popular dance music and learn how to do sound engineering, mixing and multi-track recording. It might also be possible to bring in unemployed veteran musicians and concert party performers to help teach school pupils improvisation, composition and general live performance stagecraft.

Besides helping establish the personnel for the World Music export sector, research in many countries has shown that music, as a part of one's education, not only enhances musical creativity but also enhances verbal and mathematical skills, physical coordination and is a general intellectual tonic.

On the political front, the commercial music and entertainment sector should have Cabinet representation. The fact that there has been no representation of culture (that includes music and entertainment) at ministerial/Cabinet level for the last 20 years has led to some missed opportunities. This should be rectified as quickly as possible, even if it means that the National Commission on Culture (NCC) would be attached to an already existing Ministry, such as Education or Tourism. Another possibility is that the NCC could remain as a Commission but that the commercial music and entertainment sector should be hived off from it and put under the Ministry of Tourism. The reason for placing the entertainment industry under the Ministry of Tourism is that, as already mentioned, local music and entertainment are an important component of foreign exchange earning from tourists.

If the music and entertainment sector were to have cabinet representation (for instance through the Ministry of Tourism) some problems - the high import duties on musical instruments, business tax-waivers and the sector's role in export drives and business promotion - could be addressed. It is precisely because the arts and entertainment are not represented at ministerial level that this area has not been included in any agreements between Ghana and the World Bank; if in the next round of Ghana/World Bank negotiations arts and culture are added, then funds can be routed to Ghana's music industry. This, incidentally, comes from a separate World Bank cultural fund and so cannot in any way interfere with other World Bank projects.

At the World Bank meeting in 2000 on the African music industry several possible areas of assistance were discussed. These included supporting music archives and copyright collecting organisations and free legal aid for poor artists and for outstanding cases of the royalty infringements suffered by veteran artists; also financing foreign tours by African bands to "showcase" African music and dance internationally, and helping local musicians' organisations to establish radio stations, video companies and recording studios. Also very important in this Internet age is the use of new anti-piracy computer technology to disseminate and collect royalties from African music distributed on the worldwide web.

Two other forms of World Bank assistance which are particularly relevant to this paper on the exportability of Ghanaian music are noted below.
(a) Micro-loans to the commercial music sector (for commercial live bands, their venues and private music schools): there are numerous live performance bands and concert parties in Ghana that have folded up through lack of equipment and spare parts. If Ghana can ratify the Arts and Culture section of its World Bank agreement it could tap this new assistance, which includes not only grants but also micro-credit loans to small music businesses.

This aid could, for example, particularly help established bands and entertainment names to get back on their commercial feet. The income from music is highly capricious and erratic and Ghanaian bands have often had to borrow money from a local promoter and therefore “bond” themselves to play during the lucrative cocoa season. These bands have not been able to get the profits from the peak season and so have got caught in a spiral of debt. Several bands I have known personally have gone to extraordinary lengths to stay together through hard times, for instance by going into farming. Soft loans would be a much better alternative in all these cases. These micro-loans could also be extended to small clubs and recording studios that cater for live performances; and to music co-operatives and the many private traditional music-and-dance schools that have mushroomed since the late 1980s (Mustapha Tettey Addy’s AAMA being the most famous) and cater for musically-inclined young foreign tourists.

The World Bank is convinced that music can be an important export earner for Africa (that is, from tourism and World Music sales) as well as playing a role in poverty reduction strategies. So the micro-credit loans it is offering to the private music sector are of a “soft” nature, with 30 years to pay and no interest whatsoever. Senegal is already enjoying the benefits of this.

(b) The World Bank could provide a grant to Ghana of, say, 60 or 70 sets of popular band equipment and supporting recording equipment, to jump-start live performance and recording in Ghana.

World Bank assistance is welcome to help to put highlife on the international map and turn Ghanaian popular dance music into an ever-renewable export. However, the single most important contribution to this would be for the Ghanaian government to treat the local entertainment industry as a potential non-traditional export sector and therefore provide a five-year tax-holiday and other investment incentives for it. This strategy would actually entail no government spending on the local commercial music industry. The government would rather just have to give the industry temporary tax waivers and concessions to allow the music industry and live entertainment sector to bloom.

Gospel boom

Much of the recent development of Ghanaian music has been within the churches, where it is free from some of the constraints.

John Collins reports from Accra

In spite of the recent growth of Ghanaian “techno-pop” music styles (bourgeois highlife and hiplife) the biggest development in the area of popular dance music over the last 20 years or so has been the efflorescence of local “gospel-highlife” of the African independent churches.

There are now literally hundreds of denominations of differing local spiritual, apostolic, charismatic and Pentecostal churches that not only utilise local popular music such as highlife for worship and outreach purposes but allow these to be danced in their churches as well.

Although gospel music based on highlife dance music really began to take off in the late 1970s, intimations of the current gospel boom began in the early 1970s, when some of the independent churches began using popular music for their “praises” and “choruses” from the early 1970s. For instance there was the church band formed by the late Reverend Andersson and the Joyful Singers of Cape Coast in 1972. That same year the well-known highlife composer Love Nortey (leader of the Happy Stars highlife guitar band) began releasing gospel-highlife records such as Mesi Me Dan Wo Obotan So (I will put my house on a rock). It was also in 1972 that Kofi Abraham and his Sekyedumasi Gospel Band released Hwaehne Na Wo Hu (Look and ye shall find) on Ambassador Records. In the 1980s he formed the Nyame Bekyere “God will provide” Band and then the Kofi Abraham Gospel Band which had 25 commercial releases including Spiritual Osode Amen and Psalm 23.

By the 1980s that local gospel music was in full swing and many other artists entered the scene. These included Mary Ghansah, the Daughters of Glorious Jesus, the Tagoe Sisters, Samuel Grippman and his Ministries Gospel Group, Ola Williams, Stella Dugan, Leslie Tex and the Saints, Reverend Yaw Agyeaman Baidoo (YABS), Jessie Jones and the seven bands of the Kristo Asafo Mission.

One reason for the emergence of local gospel-highlife from the late 1970s was that the churches (even the established orthodox ones) had noticed that they were losing
congregations to the local African independent churches. These had a tradition of worshipping through dance (although not popular dance) that goes way back to the Church of the Twelve Apostles and the Musama Disco Christo Church of the 1920s. However, the real trigger for the current gospel-highlife "explosion" was a series of economic and political changes that began in the 1970s. The first factor was the economic decline of Ghana during the corrupt Acheampong-Akufo military regimes, when the music industry collapsed and thousands of talented Ghanaian musicians left Ghana in an artistic "brain drain" to Nigeria and countries in Europe and North America. For many of the artists who remained behind in Ghana the local churches provided one of the few venues for their music, as the churches increasingly used popular dance music for worship and outreach purposes. Incidentally, this situation of an economic decline leading to commercial secular music going sacred resembles the situation in the US after the Great Crash of 1929, during the years of economic depression that followed this "crash" the American record industry shrank and many American jazz and blues artists went under the patronage of the black American store-front churches and created "hot gospel".

In Ghana after 1979, musicians had to contend not only with the economic collapse of the country but also with several years of revolutionary upheaval followed by a night curfew between 1982 and 1984. During both the initial revolutionary period and the IMF-instigated economic liberalisation period that began in the mid-1980s, the entertainment sector was given the lowest priority by the government of Jerry Rawlings. As a result musical instruments were classed as luxury imports and a 160 per cent import duty was placed on them. This taxation on the "tools of the trade" of musicians finally destroyed the last few remaining self-financing highlife bands and concert parties that had survived the years of economic decline, upheaval and curfew.

On the other hand the churches, being charitable bodies, did not have to pay import duties (or the prepaid entertainment tax on gate fees). And so even more popular musicians moved under the wings and into the untaxed space of the churches - who provided them with instruments, recording opportunities and in many cases a small salary.

In fact quite a number of Ghana's leading musicians, finding it economically impossible to run a commercial band during the 1980s, started to release gospel music and/or moved under the patronage of the church. Examples are A.B Crentsil, C.K. Mann, Papa Yankson, Kofi Sammy, Carlos Sakyi, Leslie Tex, Jesse Jones, Nana Ampadu, Jewell Aduah, T.O. Jazz, A.K. Yebuah, Francis Kenya, Ani Johnson and Daddy Lumba.

I actually saw all this happen from my own Bokoro Recording Studio that I set up at Ofankor near Accra in late 1982. For a few years this was one of only two studios operating in Ghana (the other was Ghana Films). At first most of the artists coming to record were from the secular side - highlife guitar bands, concert party bands, reggae groups and Afro-rock outfits - with gospel bands being in the minority. However, by the late 1980s the situation had been reversed with most of the bands being church based ones. But they were playing the same highlife played by the very same musicians - though of course with lyrics of a religious rather than profane nature.

Besides the use of Christian lyrics, another change I noticed was that this new gospel version of highlife was that, for the first time, large numbers of women (as vocalists) began coming to my studio. Indeed, in Ghana it would be true to say that local Ghanaian gospel began to become dominated by women singers. Whereas previously a family would always forbid a daughter to become a popular stage artist (this being associated with drink, loose living and an itinerant lifestyle) families could hardly forbid their daughters to sing in church choirs. These choirs were backed by popular music ensembles, and these even included "devil's instruments" such as guitars, drums and horns that had become sanctified by the church.

Again, this feminisation of popular music is similar to what happened with the American "hot gospel" of the pre-war and early post-war era when African American female singers like Mahalia Jackson and Aretha Franklin were able to enter into commercial singing through the avenue of the black churches.

By the 1990s the "gospel boom" in Ghana was in full swing. In 1990 the military government of the time, just emerging from a quasi-Marxist-Socialist "cultural revolution", actually gave instructions to the state Ghana Broadcasting Corporation to reduce the amount of gospel music airplay time by half. But this had little effect on the waxing of danceable gospel highlife, which has been estimated over the last 10 years or so to comprise between 50 to 70 per cent of the airplay and local music cassette production. At the same time commercial cinemas and open-air dance-spots (like the Orion, Palladium and Apollo Theatre in Accra) were taken over by huge all-night church cruades and filled with the gospel music. Special national gospel award competitions have also been initiated. Some churches have even set up their own recording studios, such as the Jesus Above All Studio and the Holy Spirit Digital Studio in Accra. Other churches have gone seriously into cassette production, such as JBA Missionary, the Church of Pentecost and Joyful Way Incorporated.

All this was helped by the quasi-commercial business orientation of the new Pentecostal churches, with their "prosperity message and Christian businessmen's breakfasts and fellowships, which had blossomed during the entrepreneurship vacuum in the anti-private-business ethos of the early revolutionary period of Rawlings' government.

A further sign of the ascendency of local gospel is that unions for gospel artists were established in the 1990s, such as the Presbyterian Singing Band Union, the Gospel Pioneers Association and the gospel branch of the Ghana Musician Union (MUSIGA). In fact one of the executive members of MUSIGA is the well-known gospel singer Diana Akiwumi.

In short, Ghanaian gospel is booming as never before and the local Ghanaian churches have become a haven for live local pop musicians, a ritual space for popular-dance sessions and an avenue for professional female singers. As exemplified by the impact of African-American "hot gospel" on soul, rhythm'n'blues and other American secular popular dance music styles, local gospel-highlife is also likely to have a significant effect on the future of the Ghanaian commercial music development.