

MEETING THE MIDNIGHT CREW

by *Kunle Falodun*

The gospel music industry in Nigeria is undergoing a revolution, like most things in that country of 130million people. The industry has witnessed the rise of a new generation of singers who are not satisfied with maintaining the status quo, but are pushing the limits, changing the image of gospel music forever. One of these groups is one with the somewhat mysterious name; "Midnight Crew".

The Midnight Crew is a gospel group, known in Nigeria for their unique style of music, fusing Nigerian "fuji music" and other traditional music systems into modern energetic gospel music. With real names, Patricia Uwaje-King (team co-coordinator), Odunayo Ojo, Gbenga Oyebola and Michael Abdul.

Michael Abdul, spoke to Praisereel during a recent tour of the team to London. When asked how Midnight Crew started, Michael said " it started years ago whilst we were all students at the Yaba College Of Technology Lagos Nigeria. At that time, we were part of a great interdenominational choir called, "Original love ". We were fulfilled during this time, as we had a passion for reaching people, which we achieved as members of the choir. We were able to hold the choir up by our raw passion for one year until we left school".

He continued "after we left school, we missed the way we were reaching people for God, the passion was burning in us, and therefore we got together and started the midnight crew. We announced the Midnight Crew in those days by visiting the churches of all our former choir members (Original love) about fifty churches in all". After this, we

released our first album in 2003 named Fusion. Fusion was not a commercial success, but it made us very popular, it wasn't a commercial success because of piracy really, but it got to various hands and increased our popularity in Nigeria especially among the youths".

When asked where the name Midnight Crew came from, Michael said with enthusiasm " The meaning is deep, first, in the book of Judges, Gideon took ten men on a mission at midnight and God gave him victory, also, the bible says weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning, the midnight is the period of crossing over to a new day. Therefore it signifies victory and hope" he stated . Praisereel enquired about their international experience, and Michael said " We first came to London in 2006 on the invitation of Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo of KICC. He got our CD from someone and when he came to Nigeria, we ministered at a meeting where he was and he there and then insisted we had to come to London" after this a company brought us to London for a concert between March and April in 2007, it was this time that we met Pastor Andrew Adeleke of RCCG House of Praise, who has become a mentor to us since then, and we have since ministered at House Of Praise several times. We currently have invitations from the USA, Ghana and Kenya which we hope to honour in the near future", he added.

Probing Further, Praisereel asked about their style of music and why they do it. " Our vision is to tear down the walls of religion through music and reach the outcast of the society" he stated philosophically, "we therefore decided to sing gospel to them using their language, but we ended up reaching even some people within the church".

Michael has a message for upcoming artistes, "keep coming up, and never stop".