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Aguata Super Highlife: *Okey Igbokwe's Musical Journey*

By Kosisochukwu Nzeribe

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FEATURE
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Aguata Super Highlife: Okey Igbokwe's Musical Journey

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When people talk about hidden gems in Igbo highlife, Aguata Super Highlife, led by Okey Igbokwe, always pops up among collectors and true enthusiasts. Their music carried the emotional depth, moral lessons, and storytelling style that define classic Igbo highlife. Even though they weren't as commercially famous as giants like Osadebe or Oliver De Coque, the group carved out a unique identity, calm, thoughtful, and culturally rich. Okey Igbokwe's leadership, soft voice, and careful arrangement style helped the band leave a lasting mark on listeners across Anambra, Enugu, Imo, and beyond.

01

Okey Igbokwe: A Musician Shaped by Culture

Okey Igbokwe hailed from the Aguata region of Anambra State, an area known for strong musical traditions, energetic festivals, and deeply rooted storytelling. Growing up in a place where traditional drums, ekwe, and ogene were common sounds shaped his musical sensibilities. He entered highlife at a time when the genre was evolving. Younger musicians were beginning to incorporate modern guitar techniques and studio production while still maintaining cultural authenticity. Okey Igbokwe belonged to this new generation, innovative, but still deeply traditional.

Aguata Super Highlife was formed as a group that reflected the

cultural soul of the Aguata area. The band blended smooth guitar melodies, melodic brass lines, rhythmic percussion, layered backing vocals and storytelling lyrics connected to Igbo philosophy. They often performed at traditional ceremonies, festivals, and community gatherings. Over time, their unique sound built a loyal fan base. Okey Igbokwe's musical style was never loud or overly dramatic. Instead, he used simplicity, clarity, and emotional expression to make his message shine. He's songs contained key elements like proverb-based songwriting, calm vocal delivery, steady, dance-friendly guitar rhythm, emphasis on moral lessons and smooth call-and-response chanting. His music was the type you could play during a family gathering, warm, familiar, and soothing. Although many of his works circulated mainly through vinyl and cassette distributions in the 1980s and early 1990s, collectors still recognize several notable songs such as:

These songs were popularly sold in markets like Onitsha Main Market, Eke Awka, Ogbete Market in Enugu, and Alaba in Lagos, places known for preserving Igbo highlife catalogs.

02

Cultural Significance

Aguata Super Highlife played an important role in preserving the distinct musical flavor of the Aguata region. At a time when bongo music, audio-demo, and urban pop were gaining popularity, Okey Igbokwe maintained the classic highlife identity. His influence includes: keeping indigenous Aguata melodies alive, preserving Igbo proverbs through songwriting, promoting clean, culturally grounded music, contributing to Anambra's musical heritage. Today, his songs remain nostalgic favorites among elders and music historians. His tracks continue to circulate on digital reissues, private archives, and among vinyl enthusiasts who appreciate the softer branch of Igbo highlife.

Aguata Super Highlife, under the leadership of Okey Igbokwe, is one

of those treasures that show the depth of Igbo highlife music. Their work reflects cultural pride, moral teaching, and melodic craftsmanship. Though not the most mainstream, Okey Igbokwe remains among the musicians who quietly shaped the emotional heart of Igbo highlife. For anyone exploring the richness of Eastern Nigerian music, his songs offer a warm, meaningful journey into the soul of Aguata.

SOURCES

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