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Oliver De Coque: *The Guitar Maestro Who Crowned Highlife in Africa*

By Chukwunwike Ossai

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OLIVER DE COQUE

Oliver De Coque: The Guitar Maestro Who Crowned Highlife in Africa

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Oliver Sunday, Akanite, known as Oliver De Coque (April 14, 1947, _ June 20, 2008,) is one of the biggest names in Nigeria's highlife music. He's not just a musician; he's a guitarist who is used to the game. He released many albums and took the culture of Igbo to far places. He was born in Ezinifite, Nnewi South, Anambra State, Nigeria. Oliver became a legend with his unique "Ogene" Sound, which mixed modern highlife with traditional Igbo vibes. His career was over 40 years, and it was not small; he released 93 albums, making it one of Africa's most prolific artists.

How did he start Oliver did not stand up one day and say he wanted to be a musician; he had some musical talent. His father plays ogene music, the traditional Igbo sound that uses metal gongs and drums. As a child, Oliver is watching and learning. When he was 17, he had already started playing the guitar, and he was a Congolese living in Nigeria; they called him "Piccolo." Please teach me how to play. The foreign vibe mixed with his Igbo tongue gave it a unique style. He started with a few bands in his area but wants what is more significant than that.

In the 1970s, Oliver joined the big league. He is playing with juju musicians like Sunny Agaga and Jacob Oluwale, but he does not want to follow his lead. So, in 1976, he formed his own crew, "Expo'76 Ogene Super Sounds." One year later, in 1977, he dropped his first album, Messiah Messiah Messiah, and that music blew people's minds. That's how people knew his seriousness.

Oliver's coque music is not ordinary and is a highlife with swag. He called his style "Ogene" because it also blends modern beats with the raw sound of Igbo tradition. You will hear the sound of the guitar, one that rings so sharp in people's ears, and sometimes a flute that is soft and gentle. He sings about life, unity, culture, and even hailing big people and groups.

Some of his works "People's Clubs in Nigeria": This one is an ode in a social club, and it sells like pure water, with over two million copies. That's his biggest hit." Identity": This track was the top radio On the Nigeria 2 chart in 1981, and weeks are still there. Biri ka Mbiri": Meaning "Live and let live", It is a song that preaches peace." Ana Enwe Obodo Enwe" Talks about a village that doesn't have a deep story. " Nnukwu Mmanwu ": Masquerade vibes that make the jump. He does not use fancy studio tricks; his sound is raw, authentic, and straight from the heart. His guitar is like his voice; it talks when his mouth stops. When Oliver performs, it is like a masquerade festival: people dance, shout, and enjoy themselves.

Oliver is not only a stage name; he's a family man, too. He has 12 children, seven boys and five girls, and they say he's an incredible person. Darlington Akanite, one of his sons (Safin De Coque), said their father did not act like a big star in the house. He is jovial and caring and plays with them like a child. But outside, he is a big name they called " Game Master" because he knows how to play poker (draft game) very well. That's where the " De Coque" came with the twist" Di ka Okwe"

He traveled to places. In 1973, he played in London, which opened the door to the world. He even played his guitar on Prince Nico Mbarga's Sweet Mother album in 1977, one of Africa's biggest songs. The University of New Orleans gave him an honorary degree in music.

Oliver died on June 20, 2008, which shocked everyone.

Oliver De Coque did not just go; he left a legacy that speaks. His son, like Safin, is keeping Coque, and Solar De Coque is keeping his

father's legacy alive.

His songs still play on music platforms and radio stations, and everywhere especially in places where Igbo is understood. He built the Ogene Music Foundation in 1997, when he was 50, to train young highlife artists.

Nigeria did not do enough to honor him. There is one statue in Ezinifite, but not enough for a man who dropped 93 albums. His class of highlife, the 70s and 80s, is gold, and Oliver is shining inside of it.

Why does he matter Oliver De Coque is a bridge that joins the old and new. He took the sound of Igbo and polished it with his guitar, making it sweet for everyone—He did not follow the fame of the whites; he stayed true to his roots, and that's why his name cannot die. Maybe "People's Club" makes you dance or "Identity" makes you think. Oliver's music is part of Africa's story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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