

Creative economy

Why Uganda's stars are abandoning the industry

Claire Nampala, a Ugandan actress and award winning producer, moved to the US in 2019 for greener pastures. PHOTO/ISAAC SSEJJOMBWE

The creatives' departure reflects a deeper crisis within Uganda's creative economy, where talent alone is no longer enough to guarantee survival, let alone growth. We look at some of the creatives who have chosen new paths.

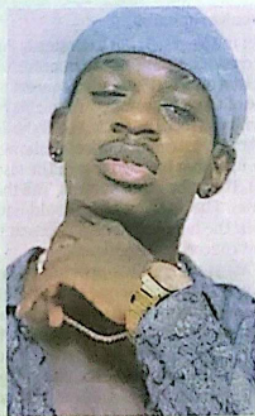
BY ISAAC SSEJJOMBWE

Once celebrated as the heartbeat of Uganda's cultural expression, many local creatives are quietly stepping away from the entertainment sector in search of more stable and sustainable livelihoods. Musicians, filmmakers, fashion designers, and visual artists, once driven by passion and national pride, are increasingly abandoning the industry after years of inconsistent income, limited institutional support, and shrinking opportunities.

Their departure reflects a deeper crisis within Uganda's creative economy, where talent alone is no longer enough to guarantee survival, let alone growth. We look at some of the creatives who have thrown in the towel.

GRENAD OFFICIAL

Musician Grenade Official, real name Deus Ndugwa, left Uganda and is now settling in the United Kingdom, allegedly in pursuit of a better life after a slow year musically last year. It is said he went to try his luck abroad as he looks for stability and new opportunities. Sources further claim that his travel was financed by a close female companion reportedly staying with him in the UK.



Dre Cali

He was once one of the artistes to watch out for. A bright career ahead of him spearheaded by Ykee Benda under Mpaka Records. He recorded songs like *Eki fuba*, *Ebisooka N'ebisembayo*, *Singa Omanyi*, *Onanagiza* with Lydia Jazmine, *Akayimba* with Myco Ouma and *Singa Omanyi* alongside Weasel among others but in 2022, Dre Cali secretly abandoned the Ugandan music scene, fleeing to Canada without notice and until now, what he is doing is

still a mystery

Afande Kerekere

At one time, Afande Kerekere was one of the best comedians in Uganda, depicting the lives of police officers. He was a true comedian who part-timed as a rugby umpire and then TV presenter at later stages of his career. When he was fired from Bukedde TV, he decided to seek greener pastures in the UK in 2020.

Zex Birangirangi

With songs like *Nalinda*, *Ratata*, *Parte Yani*, and *Magazine*, among others, artiste Mayega Tadeo, alias Zex Birangirangi, was really destined for greatness, but earlier last year, he surprised many when he decided to relocate to the US. He started by selling off all his belongings, including cars and other assets. Rumour had it that he moved to be with his girlfriend Sherry Coco, an American citizen.

Rabadaba

Ugandan dancehall artiste Rabadaba (real name Faisal Seguya) relocated to the United Kingdom, leaving behind a music career that spanned over 10 years. Rabadaba stated he did not move to the UK for "greener pastures" or work but rather for a break, but we understand he moved to live with his then wife, Nnalongo Maggie, after they legalised their relationship, but their relationship ended thereafter. There were, however, some reports that he had rekindled his relationship with his baby mama, Sheila Ferguson, who is also based in the UK.

Michael Ross Kakooza

He became popular in the early 2000s as a break dancer and singer with songs like *Senorita*, *Yoyo*, and *You're the One* among others.

In 2018, he was shamelessly bounced off stage by bouncers during America's R&B sing-

