



TUNE IN

How Nigerian Television Raised a Generation

From The Village Headmaster to DStv
and Nollywood · 1959-2009

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Tune In: How Nigerian Television Raised a Generation

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Before You Press Play

Think back to a Sunday evening. The family is gathered, the volume is up, and somewhere in the house someone shouts for everybody to be quiet because the programme is starting.

That moment belonged to millions of Nigerians at once. Millions of children and young adults tuned in week after week to watch serials that mirrored their daily lives, social structures, and cultural identities. These classic television programmes functioned as informal classrooms, shaping moral values, linguistic habits, and social consciousness across an entire era.

This book follows that screen from its first flicker in 1959, through ten shows that raised a generation, into the noisy, crowded, satellite-lit television of the 2000s. Along the way you will meet the creators, the catchphrases, the decrees, the dishes and the dramas.

Press play.

What's inside

- **Part One:** How it all began, from one station in Ibadan to a national network
- **Part Two:** The ten shows that raised a generation
- **Part Three:** The 2000s, when private networks, satellites and Nollywood changed everything
- **Part Four:** Your questions, answered
- **Bonus:** A timeline and a show-by-show guide

Part One: The Signal Begins

Before the shows, there was the station. Before the station, there was a single bold idea.

October 1959: The Screen Lights Up

Television broadcasting in Nigeria began in October 1959 with the launch of Western Nigeria Television, known as WNTV, in Ibadan, which was the first television station in Nigeria and is widely described as sub-Saharan Africa's first.

This early broadcast medium laid the physical and cultural foundation for home-grown dramatic art forms.

One Network, One Nation

Decades later, Decree No. 24 of May 1977 established the Nigerian Television Authority to create a centralized national television network. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the establishment of the Nigerian Television Authority network created a unified broadcasting framework that allowed regional productions to reach national audiences.

Now the stage was set. What would be performed on it?

Part Two: The Ten Shows That Raised a Generation

Ten programmes. Ten doorways into a shared childhood.

1. The Village Headmaster

At a glance: Created by Segun Olusola · Began 1968 · Set in the fictional community of Oja

Beginning in 1968 and running for two decades on national television, *The Village Headmaster* stands as one of the longest-running and most influential television dramas in Nigerian history. Created by Segun Olusola, the series was set in the fictional rural community of Oja and used village life to address complex national social issues.

Characters like the wise schoolteacher Chief Ofuji and the multifaceted villagers taught viewers about civic duty, communal harmony, and the balance between modern administration and traditional customs. The show became a Sunday evening staple that families gathered around to watch together, fostering a shared cultural vocabulary for generations of viewers.

2. The New Masquerade

At a glance: Began as a regional television play in Owerri, 1976 · Starring Chika Okpala as Chief Zebrudaya

Originally starting as a regional television play in Owerri in 1976 before transitioning into a network favourite in the late 1970s, *The New Masquerade* brought sharp satire and uproarious comedy into Nigerian living rooms.

Written by James Ene Henshaw and later championed by Smart Ebbe and in-character performances by actors like Chika Okpala as Chief Zebrudaya, the show used humor to critique economic

struggles, marital discord, and post-colonial identity. Zebrudaya's unique brand of fractured English became a permanent fixture of popular slang. Through laughter, the programme taught young viewers how to navigate cultural diversity and urban migration with wit and resilience.

3. Cockcrow at Dawn

At a glance: Released 1980 · Creative guidance of Peter Igbo · Rural development in northern Nigeria

Released in 1980 under the creative guidance of Peter Igbo, *Cockcrow at Dawn* was a pioneering family drama that focused on rural development in northern Nigeria. The story followed a family that relocated from the city to a rural farming community to introduce modern agricultural techniques and sustainable practices.

Academic studies analyzing its development communication strategy highlighted how the series educated rural and urban populations alike on farming, community cooperation, and environmental stewardship. The show's catchy theme song and realistic depiction of agricultural life inspired many young viewers to appreciate rural enterprise.

Keep Reading

You have just met three of the ten shows that raised a generation. Seven more are waiting, and so is everything that happened when the screen changed.

Still to come in the full edition

- **Basi and Company:** a man who believed he would soon be a millionaire without working for it, and his long-suffering landlord Mr. B
- **Tales by Moonlight, Mirror in the Sun and Behind the Clouds:** folktales, glamour and growing up
- **Ripples, Checkmate and Sura the Tailor:** soap opera, boardroom betrayal and the humour of everyday hustle
- **Part Three:** how the 1992 decree, satellite television, *Big Brother Africa* and Nollywood rewrote the dial
- **Part Four:** a quick-answer Q&A for quiz nights and family arguments
- **Bonus:** a 1959–2009 timeline, a ten-show guide, and sources

Which show was yours? Get the full book to find out whether it made the list.

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