

Rapper Akon to buy 50% of African music download service

DAKAR - Senegalese-American rapper Akon announced Saturday he would purchase 50% of African music download service Musik Bi, as the platform struggles to gain a foothold after its launch 18 months ago.

Africa's first home-grown platform for legal music downloads, Musik Bi launched in Senegal in February 2016 with a mission to promote African artists, pay them properly, and fight internet piracy.



Akon, whose real name is Aliaune Badara Thiam, announced in Dakar he would become the majority shareholder in the service, describing Musik Bi as 'the platform of the future' | © [John Muchucha](#)

Akon, whose real name is Aliaune Badara Thiam, announced in Dakar he would become the majority shareholder in the service, describing Musik Bi as "the platform of the future".

"It's not just a platform for Senegal but for Africa," he added, refusing to be drawn on what he had paid for the transaction.

Best known for his singles "Locked Up" and "Smack That", Akon has devoted more of his time in recent years to his Lighting Africa solar energy initiative and other charitable pursuits.

He launched his latest single "Khalice", a collaboration with Senegalese superstar Youssou Ndour, exclusively on Musik Bi.

More than 200 internationally famous musicians, along with younger rappers, jazz artists and Christian and Muslim vocalists, initially agreed to put their music on Musik Bi, where users can download it using their phone credit.

CEO Moustapha Diop, whose company Solid pioneered the project, said ongoing disputes with phone companies over their cut of takings had hindered Musik Bi's reach.

"We have the ambition of developing across Africa and being 'the' musical distribution platform in Africa," Diop told journalists.

"The profit made by the operators is problematic because it goes against the interests of the artists and the platform in general. We will keep pushing to get a reasonable deal," he added.

After mobile operators took their share, artists keep 60% of their income from the service, while Musik Bi take the remaining 40%.

The platform also hopes to broaden into a music festival, television channel and a streaming service, Akon said.

Piracy and changing consumer habits have seen record sales drop across the continent, with illegal downloads tempting African consumers looking online for music while copyright enforcement remains relatively weak.

Source: AFP

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