6 | *Modi operandi* in the making of 'world music' recordings

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This chapter gives an ethnomusicologist's perspective on the relationship between academia and the record business. It examines the early days of ethnological field recording and the making of commercial recordings outside the Western world, traces the growth of cross-marketing, and presents three rather different approaches to the making of world music recordings.

'World music'

The term 'world music' has been used in academia by ethnomusicologists for nearly fifty years. Perhaps the first university course with a 'world music' title was Bob Brown's 'World Music Program' at Wesleyan University (a leading centre of musicological innovation) in the early 1960s.[1] In 1964 Bruno Nettl used the term as though it were self-explanatory.[2] In 1972 an issue of the *Music Educators Journal* devoted to the topic 'Music in World Cultures' included an article by Charles Seeger entitled 'World Musics in American Schools, a Challenge to be Met'.[3] In 1975 John Blacking established an 'Ethnography of World Music and Dance' course as part of the MA in ethnomusicology at Queen's University, Belfast. And finally, there are the ten volumes of *The Garland Encyclopaedia of World Music*, published between 1998 and 2002. This encyclopaedia in effect defines the boundaries of the term 'world music' as currently used by ethnomusicologists, showing that it refers to the totality of the 'musics of the world' other than Western art and Western popular music.

In due course the term was adopted by the recording industry in the West. In 1987 a group of interested parties (representatives of independent record companies, concert promoters, broadcasters) held several meetings to:

> discuss details of a modest promotional campaign for the autumn, and to boost sales of the increasing numbers of records being issued, as the boom in interest in African music continued and extended to other parts of the world. One of the

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> obstacles to persuading record shops to stock much of the new international product was reported to be the lack of an identifying category to describe it, record shop managers didn't know whether to call it 'ethnic', 'folk', 'international', or some other equivalent, and were inclined in the absence of an appropriate niche in their racks simply to reject it … the term chosen was 'World Music' … No better short phrase has yet been proposed, and thus the term World Music has taken on quite a sturdy life of its own …[4]

Subsequently the term has also come to refer to commodified recordings of non-Western music made for a Western market. *Billboard* introduced its world music album chart in 1990. *World Music: the Rough Guide*, which includes a substantial discography of commercial recordings, was first published in 1994.[5] Many commercial recordings of world music since the late 1980s have been recorded in technically sophisticated studios in Europe and North America, leading to the subgenre of 'world beat', which has been defined as:

> a hybrid musical form that combines European American popular music with selected elements from Latin American, African, Asian, Caribbean, Australian, European, and/or North American vernacular musics. The term is often contrasted with 'world music,' a label that describes non-Western folk and traditional art musics marketed to Western audiences – musics that lack obvious Western pop influences.[6]

The process of creating a world beat product 'involves more than adding rock instruments to traditional music, or superimposing different musical styles – it is also a question of imposing sophisticated sound ideals and recording techniques, typical for rock music'.[7] From this brief introduction it should be apparent that academia and the recording industry have rather different understandings of what is meant by world music.

A brief history of recording the musics of the world

Thomas Edison patented his invention of the phonograph in 1878. Robust and portable, recording on wax cylinders, the phonograph was used by ethnomusicologists into the mid-1930s. Erika Brady's *A Spiral Way* gives a highly informative account of the extensive use of the phonograph in documenting Native American language and music, starting with the recordings of Passamaquoddy songs made by Walter J. Fewkes in 1890. Many of the ethnologists (as these early American anthropologists called themselves) who documented Native American cultures in this period

relied heavily on the phonograph as a research tool, though there were contrasting views about its usefulness:

> For some, it provided a convenient and practical means to document the forms of verbal and musical expression considered the essential units of a community's traditional culture; others considered it too cumbersome and intrusive to use on a regular basis. Some collectors welcomed the opportunity to make use of a dynamic new technological innovation; others saw the very novelty of the phonograph, and the social change its dissemination heralded, as a symptom of precisely that progressive force against which they were valiantly holding the line. Some regarded the device as a means to achieve a scientific objectivity in their work: others saw it as a cheap evasion of the skill in transcription essential to any well-trained ethnographer.[8]

A few years after the American lead in recording non-Western music, the phonograph was being used by anthropologists, explorers, missionaries and others to record music in many parts of the world. The year 1900 saw the establishment of the Berlin Phonogrammarchiv, a large collection of wax cylinders that comparative musicologists such as Erich von Hornbostel used as the principal resource for so much of their research. Like the Native American recordings, the cylinders in Berlin and other archives in Europe were research materials which were never made for commercial purposes. In about 1920, though, a limited edition of Hornbostel's *Demonstration Collection* was published in cylinder form.

The phonograph was very useful as a recording machine with instant playback facility, but mass production of cylinders for commercial purposes was a problem. In 1895 Emile Berliner in the USA introduced the flat disc, opening the way for the large-scale pressing of records. The speed with which flat discs, and the gramophones on which to play them, was adopted is astonishing. It was a good example of practical modernity, not unlike the adoption of the mobile telephone a hundred years later. The exploitation of niche markets by the early record companies was also remarkable.

Ethnomusicologist Pekka Gronow gives an exemplary account of the explosion in music recording activity in a broadly defined 'Asia', that occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century.[9] Between 1900 and 1910 the Gramophone Company made over 14,000 records of Asian and North African music. Its main centres of operation were Russia, Egypt and India, from where its activities extended into adjacent regions, recording a great diversity of genres and songs in many languages. The Gramophone Company's list catered for a wide range of cultures, addressing every market. The motivation was commercial, not so much to sell records as to sell gramophones, the equipment to play the records. One of the most

documented sound recordists is Fred Gaisberg, who in 1902 was sent by the Gramophone Company to Calcutta, to 'open up new markets, establish agencies, and acquire a catalogue of native records'.[10] From India he went on to make recordings in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Java, China and Japan.[11]

There were no recording studios at that time; the medium was too new. The acoustic recording equipment would be set up in a hotel room or a theatre and in this sense the recordings were like 'field recordings'. Considerable skill was required to achieve good results with this early equipment. An important role was played by middlemen – people with local knowledge – who would bring in appropriate performers to record. Sound recordists like Gaisberg were often scathing in their evaluations of what was being recorded.[12] The main constraints imposed by the technology were the duration of two-and-a-half to three minutes of early recordings and the acoustic limitations of what could be successfully recorded with the available hardware.[13] The ethnomusicologist Gerry Farrell gives a detailed account for early recordings in India of how vocal and instrumental renditions of *ragas*, with highly complex cumulative forms, could be précised in the short time span of the 78-rpm record.[14]

Another American company, Victor, sold records of East Asian music to Chinese and Japanese migrants in the USA, and released many of the Gramophone Company's Turkish and Arabian recordings for the American 'ethnic' market. Gronow estimates that between 1900 and 1930 some 50,000–100,000 titles of 'Oriental music' had been recorded commercially. In the USA records were also made for immigrant communities from Europe and for distribution in their countries of origin. Many of the early recordings of Irish music were made in New York, for the Irish American community, and were exported to Ireland, where records by musicians like the fiddle-player Michael Coleman became extremely influential, being widely emulated at the local level. It would seem that the music of many other immigrant communities went through the same process. There was a marked decline in this recording activity in the 1930s as a result of the economic depression and the advent of radio and sound film.

These early commercial recordings of the music of the world were extremely important at the local level within the sound communities which had given rise to them. Comments by the ethnomusicologist Jihad Racy, about the record industry in Egypt, are probably true for many societies:

> the gradual transformation of the phonograph from a curious toy into a serious musical mass medium that involved the performer, the audience, and the businessman ... evidenced a significant change in musical life represented by the

emergence of the recording artist and by a musical market sustained by a record-consuming audience.[15]

The possible effects of the new sound medium on musical life, especially in societies where music was an oral rather than a notated tradition, include the following:

1. Standardisation: a record in an oral tradition becomes a fixed item; that which was always transient and ephemeral has now become tangible. The record conveys general information about a genre, may say something about the 'cutting edge' within that genre, and contains very specific information which can be used as a model from which to learn. Thus a record may become a learning resource which codifies a particular performance and thereby tends to standardise it.
2. Stylistic change: the opposite process to (1) may also take place. Exposure to records and learning from records may lead to an accelerated rate of stylistic change. New ideas in music are communicated much more quickly via recordings than through live performance. Processes of change, which in other circumstances might take fifty to a hundred years to unfold, may now occur in a very short time span. There is something about marketing records which generates a need to experience forward movement and innovation.
3. Raising of social status: the medium of sound recordings is an aspect of modernism and modernisation and carries with it a certain notion of progressiveness and respectability. The decontextualisation introduced by the possibility of sound recording, the separation of sound from source, listener from performer, can result in an elevated status for the performer, who is no longer at the behest of a live audience.
4. Emergence of the recording artist: a new kind of status for the musician may arise, often connected with a 'star system' in which particular songs are identified with known artists and are viewed with reference to the total body of that individual's creative work. There is a keen interest in the latest work of the individual and the private lives of stars are the subject of much comment and gossip.

Early commercial records were directed primarily to local markets, to specific cultural communities. However, there must have been some degree of 'leakage' in a city like New York, a centre for the nascent recording industry with its many immigrant communities. The record companies were ready to exploit any niche market, such as a Western intelligentsia with an interest in the music of people beyond the West. It is clear that the

industry made some efforts to address an audience with a potential interest in the music of 'the other'. One example is *Musik des Orients*, an album of fourteen 78-rpm records, compiled and edited by Hornbostel in 1931. It included recordings of Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Javanese, Balinese, Indian and Arab music and has been reissued several times. There are probably other examples but their identification awaits further research.

Records were also cross-marketed to the non-Western world. A good example is provided by the HMV GV series of Latin American records, about 250 of them, released between 1933 and 1958. They were drawn from the Gramophone and Victor catalogues (hence 'GV series'), cheaply manufactured, and aimed initially at the West African market, becoming very popular also in Central Africa where they were important in stimulating new genres of African popular music. Known locally by their GV numbers rather than by their titles, GV records formed a staple part of the output of local radio stations in Africa which were established around the late 1930s to early 1940s.[16] The popularity of Latin American music parallels the export of North American popular music, especially jazz and related genres, to much of the rest of the world.

The next stage in cross-marketing 'ethnic recordings' to a Western market came about with the Folkways enterprise in New York. Asch started Folkways Records in 1949, soon after his earlier company, Disc Records, was declared bankrupt;[17] 1949 was also the year when the first 33-rpm long-playing discs were published. The Folkways catalogue, of more than 2,000 LPs,

> cover[s] nearly every corner of the globe. Many of these records do not sell more than a hundred copies … Folkways keeps costs down by not going in for three-color pictures on the jackets, and by spending practically nothing on advertising. By charging relatively high prices, it can break even.[18]

Ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger (the nephew of folk musician, Pete Seeger) became the director of Folkways when the archive was purchased by the Smithsonian Institution in 1986. He writes:

> Folkways was famous as a publisher of 'scholarly' ethnographic recordings – thick LP records in heavy cardboard sleeves, replete with 12 or more pages of liner notes. Although not a scholar himself, Moses Asch believed strongly in the importance of documenting and preserving musical traditions of all kinds from all parts of the world. Folkways was the precursor of many of the later 'world music' labels such as Auvidis, Rounder, Arhoolie, and others. Folkways was also famous for its role in the US (and world) folk music revival of the 1950s–1960s and for its policy of keeping all recordings in print …. Examination of Folkways' sales for the last 4 years that Asch ran it (1982–86) showed 30% of the titles had sold less than 10 copies, and only

75 of the 2165 titles sold more than 500 copies. Major record companies often delete a title that is selling less than 10,000 per year.[19]

It is clear that Asch was not interested in 'big money'; his was an altruistic enterprise. His earliest attempts at releasing 'ethnic' records was described by *Billboard* in 1947 as 'an educational rather than a musical set ... of interest to anthropologists, folklorists and perhaps dance students'.[20] Asch was described as 'the "conscience" of the recording business' because of the lenient way that his creditors treated his bankruptcy.[21]

As already noted, Anthony Seeger describes Folkways as the precursor of many of the later world music labels. These had similar educational intentions but rather than being the product of a private company they received a measure of state or institutional sponsorship. Perhaps the best example is the UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music founded in 1961 by Alain Danielou in collaboration with the International Music Council, with technical and financial assistance from the now defunct Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation in Berlin. The Bärenreiter UNESCO series was published in 12″-LP format, starting in 1961. Now the record sleeve opened out into a booklet, usually in three languages. The motivation was scholarly, part of UNESCO's programme for the preservation and revitalisation of the 'intangible musical heritage'. The records were usually compilations, drawing together a number of different genres to give an overall view of the particular musical culture as a whole and with very little attention to individual artists. The people who made the original recordings were usually ethnomusicologists of one kind or another, for whom recording was just one part of their fieldwork. These records had little impact in the countries of origin where they passed unnoticed. They were not made for local markets where LP-playing equipment was not readily available.

After the Bärenreiter series came many similar endeavours, especially in France, with Musiques du Monde, Auvidis and Ocora.[22] In the USA, apart from Folkways, Lyrichord and Nonesuch were the main producers. With the advent of the CD in the 1980s there has been a spate of new labels, such as Real World, World Network, Music of the Earth and Music of the World. Today, a large number of recordings of traditional music from all over the world are available. Clearly, these developments were not occurring in isolation but were part of wider social currents in the post-colonial world, such as improved travel, migration, tourism, cultural eclecticism, the growth of minority arts organisations, multicultural concerts and festivals, and multicultural music curricula in schools.

Three case studies of making world music recordings

This section examines the practices of three individuals who are representative of different approaches to the recording of world music.

Hugh Tracey and the International Library of African Music

A good example of a particular *modus operandi* is provided by Hugh Tracey, in his paper 'Recording African Music in the Field', published in 1955. Tracey was a freelance broadcaster in South Africa with a keen interest in African music, who later started the African Music Society. He was the editor of its publication *African Music*, and founded the International Library of African Music. Part of his work was with a small record company, Gallo, which sold 78-rpm records to a predominantly black South African market. His paper reveals how the recordist may quite deliberately shape the recording. He says:

> you must first face the fact that any sound recording is only a partial statement of the whole event … recording is an art form operating within the limitations of a frame which demands its own set of rules … A recording, however good, is never the real thing, but a *representation* of the original … an artistic discrimination which will bring out the essential characteristics of the music within the limitations of time and space dictated by the medium.[23]

Tracey's recordings were destined to become 78-rpm records, and the three-minute time constraint applied even though by this time he was recording on quarter-inch tape. He discusses at length the problem of getting a 3-minute performance from musicians for whom 'time is no object'. 'How to keep a musician's mind on his job of recording actively without sinking back into an easy doze of repetitions has always been a problem without issuing spoken instructions which would spoil the recording.'[24] Tracey explains some of the signs and signals to performers that help to overcome these problems. He continues:

> Starting and stopping requires special care. The beginning of a recording can make or mar the whole performance. The habit of allowing the performers to get into their stride first then fading in the recording has nothing to recommend it, and the same applies to endings which are faded out. It leaves an incomplete picture, a raw end which produces a sense of frustration in a keen listener. Starting cleanly and firmly, straight into the item at the correct tempo and with the right attack is not easy … Eager performers often beat the pistol … and to prevent this I usually hold one

hand high. An exaggerated sweep downwards of the hand after a two or three second pause will then get the performers under way with a feeling of confidence …

During the course of an item I find it essential to glance constantly at the stop watch, not only to note the passage of time, but to measure the exact duration of a verse or stanza. In this way one can gauge the number of verses which will fit into the allotted time limit and so prepare the performers for a proper ending. This I do by raising one arm to shoulder level with the hand in front of the face. Then, as the last verse is ending I make a wide slow sweep of the arm outwards and downwards, at the same time bending the knees. This bending of the knees is a universal African gesture and never fails to indicate the ending.[25]

Tracey is very good at the need to get the balance right between the various sounds produced by the performers, and in getting the right kind of natural reverberation:

a recording of an outdoor working song in a hall with high reverberation, out of its normal context, is usually unsatisfactory. On the other hand, hymns sung in the open air by few voices with no appreciable assistance from reverberation may sound out of place on the finished recording. The degree of reverberation which creates the background out of which the item emerges is most important … a plain wall, or a sheltered verandah makes an almost perfect studio in which one can alter the degree of reverberation at will by placing the performers nearer or further away from the surface of the wall …[26]

This account is particularly sophisticated for its time, and shows the extent to which field recordings may be the constructions or creations of the recordist.

Recording the music of Afghanistan

When I embarked on what turned out to be a career in ethnomusicology I took it for granted that a good deal of my research would involve making sound-recordings. My recording work was typical of ethnomusicologists of the late 1960s to the 1990s using quarter-inch analogue tape, freed from the 3-minute time constraint. When I started work in Afghanistan in 1973 I was equipped with a Sony TC800B, a simple half-track mono open-reel battery-operated recording machine, a sort of 'poor man's Uher', which I used with the microphone supplied.[27] Given the low cost of the equipment, the technical results were quite satisfactory.

My research was conducted in collaboration with Blacking at Queen's University. The object of study was a new musical instrument – the fourteen-stringed *dutar* – that had recently appeared in the city of Herat, in western Afghanistan. I was guided from afar by Blacking who had

worked for Tracey for several years and had extensive experience of field recording during his two years of Venda fieldwork in South Africa. Through my mistakes I soon learned about the importance of microphone placement, getting the record level right and adjusting it very gradually. Blacking made a distinction between what he termed 'test' and 'in-context' recordings. The test recording, which might also be termed the 'out-of-context recording', is of a performance put on specifically for the purpose of making the recording. The in-context recording is made at a musical event which would take place whether or not the event was recorded. The performance is thus recorded within its normal social context, though subject to a degree of alteration by the presence of the recorder and recordist.

In my first year of fieldwork my recordings were mainly of the 'test' variety. I concentrated on recording players of the *dutar*, a long-necked lute, which existed in several versions, with two, three, five and fourteen strings. I tried to identify a representative *dutar* repertoire, and recorded many performances of the same five tunes played by *dutar* players of different levels of expertise. Some of the *dutar* players I recorded were unskilled learners, but that was all part of the investigation, to see how the *dutar* player's skill developed. On occasion I felt impelled to tune an informant's instrument because it was so painfully out of tune. Some of these recordings were made in hotel rooms rented for the purpose, some were in my own home, some in other places. I also recorded my *dutar* lessons with three teachers who would play simplified and slowed down versions for me to learn from. I made written transcriptions, both in the field and back in Belfast. I also filmed some *dutar* players performing the five tunes, using mute super 8 film, and made asynchronised audio recordings at the same time.

I did much more in-context recording in my second year of fieldwork (1976–7). I now had a better understanding of an anthropological approach to the study of music. While I still made many out-of-context recordings of individual musicians, I was mainly interested in events where music was performed, such as weddings, spring country fairs, Ramazan concerts and quasi-musical religious performances such as Shiah mourning ceremonies and Sufi rituals. I needed to record complete events lasting for several hours, rather than simply sampling them, and I started using a cassette recording machine (Sony TC55 with external microphone) for these long events.

My recordings were made as research documents, without thought as to their eventual publication as world music records. Issues of copyright and ownership did not concern me. When I made test recordings I paid those who recorded for me but as I got to know certain people very well the issue of payment seemed to fade away. For in-context recordings I did not usually

pay anything. The radio-cassette machine had just become widespread in Herat in 1973, usually brought back from the Gulf or from Iran by young migrant workers. The convention had been established that one could set up and record any live event as of right. At the Ramazan concerts I attended there was usually a bevy of amateur sound recordists in front of the stage, microphones attached to the aerials of their radio-cassette machines instead of to microphone stands.

It was fifteen years before any of my recordings found their way into the public domain. The first publication was the audio cassette that went with my monograph on music in Herat, published in 1988.[28] The idea of a book accompanied by audio materials was becoming more common at the time, although it faced certain marketing problems.[29] When the time came to publish some of my recordings in CD format, I regarded them as substantial academic publications, reminiscent of the Folkways/UNESCO concept of the scholarly publication with extensive notes. I was not motivated by financial considerations, in the sense of expecting to earn any money from these publications, but of course they contributed to my academic profile and career. One CD was a collection of pieces played by Rahim Khushnawaz on the *rubab*, under the title *The Rubab of Herat*. Another was a compilation of pieces from a number of musicians *The Traditional Music of Herat*.[30]

Peter Gabriel, WOMAD and Real World

In 1980, the rock musician Peter Gabriel, formerly of the group Genesis, established the World of Music, Art and Dance (WOMAD) festival, an annual event bringing together musicians from many parts of the world. In due course various educational projects developed from this, aimed at providing materials appropriate for teaching world music in British schools. And there were other aspects, too: as Peter Gabriel explains, when the WOMAD festival went on tour there were 'frequently "spontaneous" interactions' between musicians of widely differing backgrounds. In 1991 Gabriel decided to bring a group of seventy-five musicians and producers together for a week at his complex of studios in rural England, in an attempt to record eight albums for release on the recently established Real World label. Some of the recordings for the CDs were made at a concert held for local villagers during the week. A BBC film was made of this experiment, called *A Real World Recorded*.[31] Clips from this show rather clearly a *modus operandi* which is probably representative of much world music recording activity: the Real World Studios were built to

create what Gabriel calls 'the marriage of hand-made and high-tech', making sophisticated studio technology available to artists who could not usually have access to it. He explains how the artists interacted:

> The festival thing is now built with this group of artists that travels around together to fourteen countries. So that this sense of community builds up on the road, with these artists for the first time saying, 'Oh, that melody's like our old folk song'. And there are all these common elements and to get that sense of improvisation and jamming which happens on all those festival tours into the studio: it's the first time we've tried to do that.[32]

Senegalese drummer, Arona, adds percussion to a track of Ugandan musician, Ayub Ogada, singing and playing his *niatiti* lyre. Sound engineer, Dave Botrill, dances about the studio to the music. At the end of the track Ayub says 'he just played some fantastic drums on one of my songs without even a rehearsal'.[33] A little later Dave Botrill explains to another musician what he wants:

> When you hear something like this which is a certain groove … you hear it a certain way and you will interpret it and play the full soup of that … it will become like an ethnic stew. And hopefully, when these other rhythms are done you can start some rhythms for other people to build on.

It seems clear from what we see on screen that the studio technique known as overdubbing (used extensively in making popular music records) is being employed here, which involves assembling the piece track by track.

However, some critical voices are also heard in the film. Karl Wallinger of the band World Party, who produces some of the recordings, says (of Peter Gabriel):

> I get the feeling that he really wants a song to come out of this, that works in its own right … like a number … wafting out of a café … He very much wants to try and find a song, rather than just having the groove. It's easy in a way to lay down tracks with everybody on them, but to make something that makes sense … It would be nice if it came out on Radio One and made sense to a lot of people.[34]

Earlier in the film, BBC world music programme-maker, Andy Kershaw, voices his doubts:

> I have to see how these collaboration things work out. I'm not entirely easy about the idea of those. I can't really see any reason why there should be any compatibility between a group from Colombia and a group from Tanzania, or whoever gets together with who[m]. These things can sometimes sound fine on paper, but they can be a frightful mess once they are on tape.[35]

Such evidence suggests that the 'spontaneous interactions' that occur between musicians on tour are perhaps not so easily transferred to the studio. It is not clear that anything particularly significant emerged from Real World Week, which indicates that experiments of this kind are unlikely to produce anything of 'value' (an admittedly difficult quality to assess). Gabriel's 'marriage of hand-made and high tech' – making sophisticated studio technology available to artists usually unable to gain access to it – does not quite seem to be what is happening. Dave Botrill appears to have a very clear idea of what he wants and to be much in control. Creating an 'ethnic stew' is perhaps an unfortunate way of describing the required end result, although it is a good example of culinary and gustatory language in talking about music. However, this was undoubtedly a learning experience for WOMAD artists, who took from it insights into the technology and possibilities of the recording studio and began to apply some of them back home (technical resources permitting). The recordings made by musicians like Ogada in the UK probably achieve little currency in the countries from which they originate. Such musicians no doubt address their own audiences in very different ways.

Conclusions

Ethnomusicologists and producers of world music records have very different projects and very different ways of working although there are areas of commonality, as exemplified in the work of Tracey. The distinction between recordings of music made to document research and recordings made to sell records has existed from the earliest days. For ethnomusicologists, making audio recordings is just one of the techniques they use in their participant observation field research methodology. Ethnographic documentation involves the writing of extensive fieldnotes, holding discussions, conversations and interviews, taking photographs, using the video camera as a research tool, conducting tests of sound perception, and the use of other research techniques as well as making audio recordings of musical performances, all of which are discussed by Jonathan Stock in this volume. The objective is to gain a better understanding of the nature of music and its role in human society in the belief that ethnomusicology is the study of all music: as sonic structure, as cultural process, and as social act.[36] Independent producers of world music records may well share the enthusiasm of ethnomusicologists for exotic music, and making recordings and publishing records is one way of expressing that engagement, and

earning a (usually) modest living at the same time. But the focus is on the sound in its own terms, divorced from its original context, and often invested with a new set of meanings that help promote sales.

In recent years, however, there has been something of a return to more basic ways of making commodified world music recordings, with a renewed emphasis on field recordings and an avoidance of excessive studio intervention. In 1997 the publicity advertised by Multicultural Media, a mail order company in Vermont with an extensive world music catalogue, stated *à propos* its new Music of the Earth collection:

> Multicultural Media – Introduces a comprehensive collection of field-recorded traditional music which transports the listener directly into the villages, the homes, the fields, the celebrations and the ceremonies of the peoples of the world. No stages. No studios. No special effects. All recordings are complemented with maps, photos, and notes from the original recording sessions.[37]

In the same vein, Robin Broadbank, who produced many world music recordings for Nimbus Records, offered the following information in 1998 when asked to comment on his recording technique:

> I'm interested in recording musicians who can give a performance in real time rather than using studio facilities to achieve a particular sound. I use a minimalist recording technique … a 'soundfield' microphone … and DAT recorder … Balance everything acoustically – by finding [the] right position for musicians and mic[rophone]. Involve musicians in deciding good balance … Don't use any eq[ualisation], extra r[e]verb etc. Musicians hear on playback exactly [the] same kind of sound as will be on [the] final CD … [I am] [c]onvinced that much acoustic music has an internal balance which can be successfully recorded … in this minimalist way. Also, that a more satisfying result would not have been achieved with multitrack recording facilities.[38]

While ethnomusicologists acknowledge that the ethnographies they produce (in the form of monographs, papers in learned journals, conference presentations, radio programmes, CDs, films and so on) are to some extent their own creations, they seek to make recordings that more or less document an ongoing actuality. Record producers, on the other hand, are more interested in creating a sonic product that will sell, and in order to achieve that goal have recourse to all the resources for manipulating sound that are provided by the advanced technology of the recording studio. There are good reasons to believe that many ethnomusicologists view the *modi operandi* of at least some world music producers with a degree of unease and disquiet, and two specific areas of concern can be identified.

The first concerns the issue of the unauthorised sampling of recordings of traditional world music to create 'club dance music'. In 1996 Steven Feld made a strong attack on the ethics of the album *Deep Forest*, in which ethnographic recordings of music from Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon, Central African Republic and Burundi were sampled and given the studio treatment to produce a CD which sold several million copies and made the producers of *Deep Forest* a great deal of money. Feld states:

> The primary circulation of several thousand small-scale, low-budget, and largely non-profit ethnomusicological records is now directly linked to a secondary circulation of several million dollars worth of contemporary record sales, copyrights, royalty and ownership claims, many of them held by the largest music entertainment conglomerates in the world. Hardly any of this money circulation returns to or benefits the originators of the cultural and intellectual property in question.[39]

This is essentially an issue of cultural rights. Following the critical lead of Feld, ethnomusicologists have become much more aware of the need to protect their field recordings from appropriation by others.

A second issue concerns what might be termed 'forced hybridisation'. The practice of trying to create new music by putting musicians from different backgrounds together in the studio needs careful examination. Ethnomusicologists understand that innovation in music has often resulted in the past from interactions between different cultures placed in long-term direct contact with each other. The origins of African American musics in Latin and North America are good examples of this process, variously called acculturation or transculturation.[40] One of the effects of the invention of sound-recording, as noted earlier, has been to accelerate the rate of stylistic change in music, through allowing people to listen to the music of other cultural communities without continuous first-hand contact. However, that is rather different from trying to create innovation in the studio, whether through interactions between performers of different kinds of world music, or through imposing the sound ideals and recording techniques typical of Western popular music. The attempt to bring together different musical systems is more likely to succeed when those engaged in the enterprise have a respect for and an understanding of the structural principles underlying each other's music, an understanding usually gained through working together over a period of time.

In addition some ethnomusicologists have a certain dislike for what they see as the overcommercialisation of world music. World music magazines, world music awards, world music record fairs and world music radio programmes do not necessarily support the work of indigenous music-makers

around the world, many of whom perform traditional genres on the verge of extinction. This point of view was recently articulated by music critic Michael Church concerning BBC Radio 3's world music awards:

> What is this 'world music'? With very few exceptions, the groups favoured by Radio 3 offer street-smart fusions – local styles with an internationalised electronic top-dressing reflecting a universal aspiration to make it big in the West. We're talking, by and large, about global pop … This is not the music of the world: it's music filched from other cultures, and filtered for consumption by the West. It's significant that Radio 3's leading partner in these awards is Womex, which represents the interests of the record industry. One ironical side-effect of this world-music boom is that record companies specialising in the *real* music of the world – traditional music recorded in traditional contexts – are now in difficulties … the cds [*sic*] of musicologically top-notch labels like Ocora and Institut du Monde Arabe are being forced off the shelves.[41]

Church's remarks may have been music to the ears of some ethnomusicologists but they go beyond the bounds of the present discussion. Nevertheless, the bigger issues he raises are indeed closely linked to differing *modi operandi* in the making of world music recordings.

Notes

1. Mark Slobin, personal communication with the author, December 2005.
2. Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 22.
3. Charles Seeger, 'World Musics in American Schools: a Challenge to be Met', in Michael E. Besson (ed.), *Music in World Cultures* (Washington: Music Educators National Conference, 1972), pp. 91–5. This is a reprint of *Music Educators Journal* 59/2 (October 1972), pp. 107–11.
4. Philip Sweeney, *The Virgin Directory of World Music* (London: Virgin Books, 1991), p. ix.
5. Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham, Dave Muddyman and Richard Trillo (eds.), *World Music: the Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides, 1994).
6. Jeremy Wallach, 'World Beat', *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (New York: Garland, 2001) vol. III, p. 337.
7. René Van Peer, 'Taking the World for a Spin in Europe: an Insider's Look at the World Music Recording Business', *Ethnomusicology* 43/2 (1999), p. 383.
8. Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), p. 88.
9. Pekka Gronow, 'The Record Industry Comes to the Orient', *Ethnomusicology* 25/2 (1981), pp. 251–84.

10. Fred W. Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p. 48. The term, 'recordist' refers to the person who makes a sound-recording as opposed to a sound engineer or recording engineer who is an expert in using highly complex recording equipment in a studio setting.
11. A CD of recordings made in Central Asia in 1909 by the Gramophone Company has been published by the British Library under the title *Before the Revolution*. Compilation and text by Will Prentice, Topic Records, TSCD921, 2002.
12. Gronow, 'The Record Industry Comes to the Orient', p. 273.
13. Peter Copeland, *Sound Recordings* (London: the British Library, 1991).
14. Gerry Farrell, 'The Early Days of the Gramophone Industry in India: Historical, Social and Musical Perspectives', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 2 (1993), pp. 31–53.
15. Ali Jihad Racy, 'Record Industry and Egyptian Traditional Music', *Ethnomusicology* 20/1 (1976), pp. 25–6.
16. Janet Topp Fargion, *Out of Cuba: Latin American Music Takes Africa by Storm*. Booklet for eponymous CD. (London: Topic Records, 2004), TSCD927.
17. Peter D. Goldsmith, *Making People's Music: Moe Asch and Folkways Records* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), ch. 4, pp. 171–223.
18. Pete Seeger, *The Incompleat Folksinger* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), p. 441.
19. Anthony Seeger, 'Ethnomusicologists, Archives, Professional Organizations, and the Shifting Ethics of Intellectual Property', *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996), pp. 93, 103–4.
20. Goldsmith, *Making People's Music*, p. 200.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
22. Van Peer, 'Taking the World for a Spin in Europe', pp. 374–9.
23. Hugh Tracey, 'Recording African Music in the Field', *African Music* 1/2 (1955), p. 7. Emphasis in the original.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
27. The Uher 420 Report Monitor was a reel-to-reel battery-operated portable tape-recorder commonly used by ethnomusicologists at the time. Those with better funding would use a superior machine such as the Nagra.
28. John Baily, *Music of Afghanistan: Professional Musicians in the City of Herat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
29. The problem here was whether to regard the printed-text/audio-recording package as a book or as a record. Bookshops were reluctant to stock what their proprietors regarded as records (in the form of audio cassettes). This problem was largely resolved with the CD of audio examples that sits in a pocket inside the back cover of the book.

30. These CDs are *Afghanistan: The Rubâb of Herat*, VDE CD-699, 1993, and *The Traditional Music of Herat*, AUVIDIS/UNESCO D 8266, 1996.
31. *A Real World Recorded*. A Tribute Real World Production in association with BBC-TV. 1992, 55 minutes.
32. *Ibid.*, 10′20″ from start.
33. *Ibid.*, 8′30″ from start.
34. *Ibid.*, 10′55″ from start.
35. *Ibid.*, 3′00″ from start.
36. I offer this as my own definition of ethnomusicology. In principle ethnomusicology includes the study of Western art and popular music, but in fact ethnomusicologists usually study non-Western music.
37. Multicultural Media's catalogue for 1997, pp. 48–9.
38. Personal communication, 1998.
39. Steven Feld, 'Pygmy POP: a genealogy of Schizophonic Mimesis', *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28 (1996), p. 27.
40. Margaret J. Kartomi, 'The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact: a Discussion of Terminology and Concepts', *Ethnomusicology* 25/2 (1981), pp. 227–49.
41. Michael Church, 'The BBC's growing debasement of world music', *The Independent*, 28 February 2005, emphasis in the original.