Negotiating Artistic Representation in the Era of #worldmusic:

Trends, Challenges, Authenticity, and the Artist's Perspective

by

Eric Leonel Cureño

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Dave Fossum, Chair
Lauren Hayes
Garth Paine

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ABSTRACT

The genre of world music and its market's reliance on musical exoticism, othering, and the audience's insatiable quest for musical authenticity have influenced and shaped the way artists construct and negotiate their musical representation. With the popularization of democratized music platforms such as Bandcamp, artists have greater autonomy in terms of artistic representation and musical distribution in the online world. Although the internet has in some ways disrupted the old power structures of the music industry, the old forms of world music marketing have been reinscribed into a new context. Old stereotypes and narratives of authenticity in world music have permeated the digital representation of artists and their music. Music recommendation algorithms also shape the way artists are represented in digital environments. Semantic descriptors such as social tags play a vital role in musical identification and recommendation systems implemented by streaming platforms. The use of social tags such as #worldmusic homogenizes diverse cultural sounds into a single umbrella genre. #World music also creates avenues for old stereotypes and narratives of authenticity to re-emerge. This re-emergence of the old tropes of world music creates less equitable recommendation and representational outcomes for musicians operating within the genre. In the age of streaming, where does world music belong? How do artists negotiate representation online? This thesis explores the dynamics of representation and the projections of "authenticity" between world music artists and record labels inside of Bandcamp's digital ecosystem. By juxtaposing the traditional framework of "world music" marketing with new and evolving methods of distribution and artistic representation, it is possible to see

how digital media are reshaping but also reproducing some of the old paradigms of world

music. I also propose that a new framework needs to be established to study the impact

digital streaming has on the genre of world music. This new framework, which I call

"World Music 3.0," will encompass how algorithms, tech companies, and the

democratization of musical practices interact within a globalized community.

DEDICATION

I would like to thank everyone who supported my artistic and academic endeavors over

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will be elaborating on technology's impact on the genre of world music and how the field of ethnomusicology has adapted and responded to technological advancement. I will also discuss the framework around world music and the academic critiques of the genre. I will present my research question as well the methodologies used to collect my ethnographic data. The main question I will be posing is how do artists negotiate representation through Bandcamp and how do they project authenticity online?

Technology's ubiquitous nature has enabled and facilitated social interactions on a global level. Andrew Ross refers to the interactions that societies maintain with technologies as technoculture.[1] Although this term is a neologism, it highlights how new interactive technologies mediate sociality.[2] Societal interaction with emerging interactive technologies has coalesced into new forms of social expression. Ethnomusicologists must now consider how technology mediates social relations. Ethnomusicologist Rene Lysloff and Leslie Gay's *Ethnomusicology in the Twenty First Century* proposes a reconceptualization of the study of ethnomusicology: the *ethnomusicology of technoculture*.

The Ethnomusicology of technoculture places an emphasis on "technological impact and change" while breaking the previous traditions of examining "folkish or high

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[1] Lysloff Rene T A. and Leslie C. Gay, "Introduction Ethnomusicology in the Twenty-First Century," in *Music and Technoculture* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).
[2] Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, "Introduction: The Changing Technoscape," in *Times of the Technoculture: From the Information Society to the Virtual Life*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 1-9.

art traditions" of music and going beyond the analysis of the "music industry."[3] Reconceptualizing ethnomusicology for the twenty-first century requires a re-imagining of fieldwork. The field, once a tangible geographic location populated by individuals, is now an ethereal space of global citizens represented by binary digits, at least within some research projects. Ethnomusicologist Timothy Cooley states that "virtuality is only as real as any other cultural production; it has only meaning with which people imbue it."[4] Indeed, cultural, and social meanings are constructed by the individuals inhabiting the technical realm.

It is evident that these types of practices in ethnomusicology will remain vital and relevant in the digital age. This is especially true since new musical distribution platforms and the accessibility to recording technology have redefined how musicians distribute, create, and represent their music on a global scale. What was once a local audience has grown into a transnational global audience. The prevailing dominance of record labels within the music market has weakened due to the introduction of music streaming platforms. The labels' ability to "control the product" and its distribution chain has greatly diminished.[5] Other factors such as the "democratization" of music have transformed the landscape of how music is produced, distributed, and consumed.[6]

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[3] Lysloff and Gay, *Music and Technoculture*, 1.
[4] Gregory F. Barz, "Virtual Fieldwork," in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 91.
[5] Robert Prey, "Locating Power in Platformization: Music Streaming Playlists and Curatorial Power," *Social Media + Society* 6, no. 2 (2020): 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120933291.
[6] Greg Jones, "21st Century Music: The Pros and Cons of Democratization," *CultureSonar*, November 1, 2018, https://www.culturesonar.com/21st-century-music-the-pros-and-cons-of-democratization/.

Within the realms of "world music," ethnomusicologists have focused on markets, capital, and intellectual property and how these structures interact with "non-western" musicians, but very little research has been conducted on how artists use this technology to represent themselves inside the social framework of the web. Due to the novelty of digital streaming, there is a limited amount of research analyzing how the semantics and the vague nature of social tags can impact the representation of an artist within digital platforms. The implementation of algorithms for recommendation must also be scrutinized, as these algorithms are now pervasively interwoven into our everyday lives. Ethnomusicologists must consider *how* these algorithms influence and impact culture on a global scale and how algorithms integrate into the musical environments in which they interact. This type of work would require an interdisciplinary approach between ethnomusicologists, computer scientists, and other scholars.

For this thesis I will be conducting an ethnographic study on world music artists' interaction with online streaming and distribution platforms. More specifically, I will be addressing the following question: *How do artists negotiate representation through Bandcamp and how do they project authenticity online?* I will be drawing content from the "world" section of the Bandcamp website as well as interviews with artists who share their music on that platform. I analyze how musicians represent themselves on Bandcamp using multimedia, biographical information, and musical analysis. For this survey and digital ethnography, artists were chosen from the world section of Bandcamp. A total of 20 bands/artists where emailed and five artists chose to participate in the interview process. For the survey portion of this thesis, all material was sourced from Bandcamp's

website by navigating through the #world, #worldmusic, and other similar hashtags in the website's User Interface (UI).

This thesis will also juxtapose the traditional framework of "world music" marketing with new and evolving methods of distribution and artistic representation. This thesis will problematize the #worldmusic tag. Although semantic descriptors such as social tags seem minuscule, they play a vital role in musical identification and recommender systems that are implemented by streaming platforms. I argue that *#worldmusic* is problematic, since it erases meaningful differences within the genre of world music thus homogenizing diverse cultural sounds into a single umbrella genre.

Although this thesis offers *a limited technical scope* within the fields of computer science, it can provide a theoretical, ethical, and ethnomusicological framework on the problematization of #world music which can inform computer scientists and engineers of the ramifications of quantifying culture, artist representation within digital spaces, and the impact algorithms have on musical representation. Finally, I aim to propose a new term, *World Music 3.0,* to capture how algorithms have a socio-cultural impact within the world music market and how these algorithms influence artistic representation through the means of digital distribution.

Defining authenticity and providing a brief historical overview of world music is vital to comprehend how artists represent themselves online. Understanding the historical context of world music and its markets informs us of artist sentiments towards representation and their artistic practice. Authenticity is an important theme when discussing world music, as it informs trends in musical aesthetics and marketing

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schemes. Although there are many facets that interact with world music and authenticity, this thesis will provide a brief overview of the important concepts that shape and construct them.

Defining "world music"

Defining "world music" is difficult since its object of reference is vague and has shifted over time. This term is used to describe a lucrative industry that creates cultural capital based on the projection of authenticity.[7] It is also used to vaguely describe musical genres outside of the western music cannon. Ethnomusicologist Robert E. Brown first coined the term "world music" in 1960 in an academic setting to describe non-western musical traditions.[8] Globalization and post-colonialism have shaped the discourse around "world music" and its practitioners.[9] Transnational dynamics and multiculturalism were now a focal point in the study of Ethnomusicology. Academic debates have emerged concerning cultural imperialism and the fears of "cultural grey out" due to globalization through digital technologies such as the internet and the influence of western record labels across the globe. Labels such as Sony, Polygram, and Time Warner, amongst others, maintained a transnational presence, disseminating western pop music to global

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[7] Many academics agree with this definition of world music. See Whitmore (2020), Feld (2000), Frith (2000), Taylor (1996), and others.

[8] Robert E. Brown, "World Music - Past, Present, and Future - College Music Symposium," College Music Symposium, May 1, 1992, https://symposium.music.org/index.php/29/item/9510-world-music-past-present-and-future.

[9] Marin Stokes, "Globalization and the Politics of World Music," in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2012), 107-116.

markets.[10] This global distribution of western pop music fomented the fears of musical homogeneity. As a counterpoint to the cultural imperialist perspective, ethnomusicologists such as Timothy Taylor, Aleysia Whitmore, and Martin Stokes, amongst others, emphasize the significance of cross-cultural collaborations between western and non-western artists. Taylor demonstrates cross-cultural collaborations in the case of Johnny Clegg, an English musician who collaborated with Zulu musicians during the African apartheid, thus challenging the colonial power structure through their music.[11] Ethnomusicologist Aleysia Whitmore views world music as a product of a socio-cultural and economic exchange:

> The genre- the meanings and social practices that make up what we now call world music- has been developing for more than a century. World music as it exists today emerges from centuries of cultural and economic exchange between Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia, and a growing demand for 'ethnic' products in Europe and North America in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[12]

From a marketing perspective, world music is an industry in which cultural products are produced to sell specifically to western markets.[13] Consumers in search of new and exotic sounds often find themselves perusing through the "world" section of their local record store, or in today's day and age, browsing through the "world artists"

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[10] The fears of "cultural homogeneity" were often discussed by ethnomusicologists and anthropologists prior to the popularization of postmodern and neoliberal philosophies. See the introduction section to "World Music and its Others" (Hesmondhalgh & Born, 2000). Martin Stokes also discusses the impact record labels had on this perceived "cultural grey-out" (Stokes, 2012).

[11] Timothy D. Taylor, "Toward a More Perfect Union: Cross-Cultural Collaborations," in *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*, Kindle Edition, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 174-180.

[12] Aleysia K. Whitmore, "Setting the Scene: The World Music Industry," in *World Music and the Black Atlantic: Producing and Consuming African-Cuban Musics on World Music Stages* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 41.

[13] Academic discourse around the capital and commodification of "world music" is often scrutinized through a commercial lens, often focusing on *western* markets. See Whitmore (2020), Feld (2000), Frith (2000), Taylor (1996), and others.

page on their favorite streaming apps. The rise in popularity of non-western musics during the 80's and early 90's led to the need to categorize such styles into their own genre.[14] Collaborations of western with non-western musicians, such as Paul Simon's *Graceland*, proved to be lucrative, hence enticing labels and record executives to establish a new genre: world music.

In 1987 a handful of western record executives, musicians and music journalists gathered in a London pub called (ironically) "The Empress of Russia" to discuss the need for a semantic descriptor for this new "global style." The rise of the genre label "world music" created a market for which cultural brokers could act as intermediaries.[15] Before the advancement and popularization of the internet, industry personnel bridged the gap between the consumer and the artists. Industry personnel play an important role in the distribution and commodification of world music, as they "manage audiences', musicians', scholars', and journalists' views and expectations of world music and what makes it valuable."[16] Negotiations amongst artists, audiences, and label executives are shaped by power asymmetries that have emerged by the way the world music industry is structured. [17] Industry personnel are often criticized by scholars as they are labeled as "colonialist explorers, discovers of the exotic, and miners of raw materials who perpetuate discourses of alterity and stereotypes of 'premodern' and 'primitive' peoples."[18] Regardless of the stigma placed on the world music industry and its

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[14] Stokes, *Globalization and the Politics of World Music*, 107-109.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Whitmore, *World Music and the Black Atlantic*, 57.
[17] Contemporary scholars have written extensively on the phenomena of power-dynamics in the world music market. See Whitmore, Feld, Novak, Zemp, Taylor, and others.
[18] Aubert, Taylor, and Firth quoted in Whitmore, *World Music and the Black Atlantic*, 55.

intermediaries, these characters play a vital role in multicultural exchanges and negotiations because "they mediate perspectives, spaces, and economic and cultural priorities as they form points of "articulation between production and consumption."[19] Institutionalization of world music has led to the scrutiny of world music both as a marketing category and as an academic concept.

Early postcolonial academic analysis of the 1990's and early 2000's exposes the exploitation of non-western musicians in the world music market. According to musicologist Simon Frith, this exploitation is a "double exploitation," as "third world musicians [are] being treated as raw materials to be processed into commodities for the west, and the first world musicians putting new life into their own music…" [20] Other anxieties surrounding the genre of world music involve the increased production of hybrid forms and the push for globalization. Critics of musical hybridization and world music argue that globalization leads to a "loss of identity" between "the people it is meant to define through musical fusion" while on the other hand, hybridization can be established as a form of resistance to the dominant culture and its establishments.[21]

This premise of cultural imperialism relies on the perception of "organic" cultures that can be corrupted by the "inauthentic" and "manufactured" Western cultures;[22] thus such world music projects rely on assumptions that non-western musical forms are pure,

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[19] Whitmore, *World Music and the Black Atlantic*, 56.

[20] Simon Frith, "The Discourse of World Music," in *Western Music and Its Others Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000.), 308-309.

[21] Simon Frith, "World Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 178-179.

[22] Reebee Garofalo, "Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity, and Cultural Imperialism," *The World of Music* 35, no. 2 (1993): 19, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43615564.

while hybridizing them with western musical forms will compromise this imagined

authenticity. Music scholar Reebee Garofalo argues that the multilateral nature of hybrid

musics "confront us with the reality that there are no easy answers to questions of cultural

imperialism, even when one factors in the systematic global dissemination of US Top

Forty."[23] The tendency to view the transnational flow of music as top down and vertical

comes from the idea of cultural dominance of western markets over smaller, less

powerful, and developing countries.[24] Realistically, the production of music is

omnidirectional and is influenced by both local and global markets as well as the actors

within them. These complex networks of musicians and industry professionals mediate

and negotiate authenticities through marketing and distribution.[25]

Fixations on power dynamics and the focus on asymmetrical power relations,

appropriation, and exploitation have become prevalent in post-colonial analysis of world

music,[26] although the critiques of world music have shifted overtime. This shift is due to

the accessibility of technology and the ability for artists to use such technologies to

promote their music independently. Although it is important to acknowledge this

asymmetry and its reactions, I argue that while these perceptions of asymmetry and

exploitation are less prevalent in the democratized digital streaming platform Bandcamp,

the old schemas of world music are still present due to the imperialist nature of the genre

of world music. Interactions between independent labels and artists within democratized

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Whitmore, 2019; Biddle and Knights 2004 quoted in Jo Haynes, "Difference and Hybridization," in *Music, Difference, and the Residue of Race* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 83-84.
[26] Born, Hesmondhalgh, and Frith, *Western Music and Its Others,* 305-320.

streaming platforms and the transnational commercial labels and artists demonstrate the establishment of neo-imperialism and the resistance of these structures. It is important to note that the keyword is *democratized.* Bandcamp's push for a fully democratized and transparent online distribution platform differs from Spotify or Apple music, as artists can provide a more intimate user experience by providing biographical information, virtual liner notes, videos, pictures, and other forms of multimedia. These features afford artists several ways to shape how they are represented online.

Bandcamp's digitization of musical representation creates new environments in which artists can construct their online image. This type of digital representation can reflect their own views on personal artistic expression, granting them independence and artistic autonomy. On the other hand, record labels on Bandcamp can implement the old schemas of world music marketing to establish an authenticity that is contingent on how record labels choose to represent artists.

Independent artists, labels, producers, and composers all have a place within Bandcamp's digital ecosystem, creating unique interactions between users and artists. The world music categories page (https://bandcamp.com/tag/world) provides interesting insight into how authenticity is constructed, deconstructed, imagined, appropriated and re-appropriated. The following examples taken from Bandcamp, together with artist interviews, will demonstrate how these actors portray authenticity online as well as how they reject or embrace the digital streaming architecture and how they perceive social tagging. A total of five bands/artists were interviewed for this digital ethnography each with their own unique perspective and personal anecdotes that will provide insight into

the current state of the world music industry, their experiences on Bandcamp, as well as

their own personal opinions regarding digital representation and authenticity.

Framing world music

Jocelyne Guilbault scaffolds the term world music into four subcategories that

characterize and construct the phenomenon of "world music." These subcategories

consist of the following characteristics:[27]

    a) A geographical space as consisting of stable, bounded territories.
    b) A corresponding sense of cultures as homogenous and belonging to locales.
    c) A notion of race which sees it in terms of fixed biological and musical
       characteristics.
    d) The sense that all those participating in this phenomenon must be
       disadvantaged – specially, economically, or otherwise – whether they be
       Africans, members of the African diaspora, or minorities of Europe and the
       Americas.

Guilbault's dissection of world music demonstrates the interactions between

geography, locales, race, sociocultural, and socioeconomic forces that construct world

music. The four subcategories presented by Guilbault have an interdependent relationship

and become part of the larger schema that we know of as world music. In the digital

domain, these four subcategories are challenged by the intangible and ethereal nature of

the internet. Digital media gives musicians the opportunity to conceal their real-world

identities, which subverts their racialization. Old interpretations of the world music

market maintain a stereotype of "disadvantaged" musicians, but many musicians who

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[27] Jocelyne Guilbault, "World Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge u.a.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 178.

participate in global markets are cosmopolitan, urbanized individuals[28] who utilize

technology to produce and distribute their music. It is also worth noting that practitioners

of the world music genre come from a multitude of western countries such as England,

Australia, and the United States.

Even though the internet is seen as a disruptor to the old power structures of the

music industry, the old forms of world music marketing have been re-inscribed into a

new context. This re-inscription of world music marketing into the online domain is

elusive as labels have the same rights of anonymity as independent artists. Labels can

choose to promote themselves and their entire catalogue or promote a single artist and

obscure their own identity. Some labels within Bandcamp use this tactic to appeal to

audiences looking for less commercialized, more independent music. The dynamics

between the new methods of musical representation, distribution, and old marketing

schemes are reflected in the democratized music platform known as Bandcamp.

Bandcamp

In an interview with NPR, Bandcamp CEO and founder Ethan Diamond described

Bandcamp not as a streaming service, but rather as a record store and community that

was established to directly support artists and foster a connection between them and their

fans.[29] Bandcamp's business model is to serve artists by providing access to digital

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[28] John Connell and Chris Gibson, "World Music: Deterritorializing Place and Identity," *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 3 (2004): 355-356, https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132504ph493oa.
[29] Damon Krukowski, "A Tale of Two Ecosystems: On Bandcamp, Spotify and the Wide-Open Future," NPR, August 19, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/08/19/903547253/a-tale-of-two-ecosystems-on-bandcamp-spotify-and-the-wide-open-future.

distribution resources and technologies. When logging on to the Bandcamp website, visitors are reminded who the platform is serving in a large banner that reads "Fans have paid artists $812 million using Bandcamp, and $15.7 million in the last 30 days alone."[30] The company's egalitarian model of online music distribution is appealing to many up-and-coming independent artists. Bandcamp is often described as the antithesis to Spotify, as it is less commercialized and operates on a smaller scale. Unlike most online streaming and distribution platforms, Bandcamp provides artists the ability to establish online profiles with artists' biographies, pictures, and multimedia as well as social media links and a virtual storefront.

In an online context, multimedia provides an outlet for artists to represent themselves in terms of familiar narratives or subvert those narratives and possibly dissociate themselves from them. In Bandcamp, exchanges of information and ideologies manifest through the commodification of culture through commercializing musical practices as well as the social networks that are formed around such practices.

Marketing culture becomes problematic with non-western musics due to the complex history of world music and its subgenres. Cultural imperialism, exoticism and musical tourism are still discussed and debated in all spheres of the world music ecosystem as the dynamics of exoticism have become deeply entrenched and embedded. Academics critique how labels market world music artists in terms of exoticist tropes while labels still use these tropes to market these musics[31]. The democratization of music

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[30] "Bandcamp," Bandcamp, accessed October 25, 2021, https://bandcamp.com/.
[31] See Feld (2000), Frith (2000), Taylor (1996), and others.

adds another layer of complexity, as musicians no longer need to rely on record labels to distribute their music. This independence from record labels grants them more autonomy within marketing and distribution, but at the same time, artists may still need to represent themselves in ways that are familiar to audiences. Unfortunately, audiences are familiar with the old problematic tropes of the world music genre. The dynamic of "old cultures" with "new technologies" and the democratization of music begs the question: How do artists negotiate their online representation? Furthermore, is it still necessary to uphold these standards of "authenticity" in the online world?

CHAPTER 2

DECONSTRUCTING IMPERIALISM: WORLD MUSIC

In this chapter, I examine the old narratives of world music by providing an

analysis on the imperialist power structures that are constructed and maintained by the

world music industry. This chapter will present artists' opinions and personal anecdotes

of the world music industry and the genre. Finally, this chapter will present examples

from Bandcamp that elucidate how artists embrace or resist the old marketing schemas of

world music within digital spaces.

> I feel like [on the other side] there is a certain degree of toxicity in the music
> industry [emphasizing US industry] and it's because of its roots. It's because the
> past had a lot of toxicity and racism. In what's called the "world music" thing,
> [Industry] which is basically a white supremacist context, you can easily look
> back and see how that was formed out of white supremacy.[32]

In a personal interview with Lone Piñon, a traditional music band from New

Mexico, I asked bandmember Jordan Wax about his thoughts on world music as a

musical genre. Jordan's response echoed the anxieties of post-colonial scholars. Jordan's

position within the network of "world music" gives us a unique perspective outside of

academia and industry: the artist's perspective. Of course, it is naïve to assume that labels

and markets control *every aspect* of the artistic experience, but the history of exploitation

and colonialism cannot be brushed away.

> I think it's different ways of telling a story. Is this uplifting and benefiting people?
> Is it integrating or giving them their place in this hierarchy? [The hierarchy] is not
> really that good a place. Right now, the framework we have is "world music'"
> with all its imperialist history. There is a certain degree of toxicity that is built
> into that structure because of its history. I think there is room for a lot of good
> things to happen, but I kind of feel like I'm not convinced.[33]

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[32] Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, interview by author, Online Interview, September 9, 2021.
[33] Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, September 9, 2021.

Historically, artists have been in the bottom of this superimposed structure as they provide the foundation and "raw materials" needed to prop up the market.[34] In the middle of this structure reside the intermediaries, whose job is to refine the "raw materials" into more recognizable and desirable products. Finally at the top of this structure are the labels, who use artists and intermediaries to produce capital. This exploitation of artists has led to a skepticism towards the world music industry by artists and consumers alike. Musician Tim Whelan echoes this skepticism but also states that choosing to navigate these exploitative conditions is part of the "musicians' inevitable job."

> Well, the inevitable job of anyone who is making money out of music is to try and force a musician to do what *they* want. The inevitable job of the musician is to decide which part of what they want to do is relevant and which part is irrelevant. That goes on the rest of your life, it never stops.[35]

Tim's critique of the world music market elucidates the negotiations artists must make when participating in the music industry. As Tim points out, in some instances, bands will not compromise their aesthetic preferences to concede to the label's and audience's expectations. Artist's may also choose to align with the prescribed musical aesthetic or artistic image, thus perpetuating and enforcing tropes found in world music. While conducting artist interviews, many of the artists expressed less interest in the marketing aspect of Bandcamp. Some independent artists on Bandcamp rely on promotion companies and managers to uphold an artistic image that reflects the aesthetic of the music that is being performed. Other artists prefer to maintain complete autonomy over their representation and manage themselves independently. Feelings of skepticism

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[34] Born and Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music and Its Others,* 28-29.
[35] Tim Whelan of Transglobal Underground, interview by author, Online, September 7, 2021.

between artists and audiences towards labels emerge from labels projecting and upholding pejorative ideals of exoticism and racialization when promoting non-western musicians.

Skepticism is not all together negative; in fact, this skepticism reflects the possibility for change in audience reception of "world music" and its marketing. Changes in the way audiences and industry perceive world music and even the rejection of this term is starting to become evident in today's evolving markets. The band Transglobal Underground has been performing and recording music for 31 years. Tim has personally experienced major shifts in the perceptions and marketing of world music throughout his career.

> I thought people have stopped using that term... I think the reason why I thought of this, [not using the term world music] in terms of journalism in Britain, the term [world music] has more or less been dropped. There was a big thing in the newspapers, a recent thing in The Guardian or one newspaper and it's interviewing some of the remaining guys who sat in this café, in some coffee bar, where they came up with the term and they were very much talking about it in the past tense. It was created to serve a purpose which was very necessary at the time, and they weren't ashamed of that at the slightest, but they were not interested in it as a term [at the time of the Guardian piece]."[36]

When I asked Tim about his opinion on world music as a genre, he pointed out that the term world music is not used as often as it once was in European markets. He noted that there is a consensus between audiences and artists that the term is outdated and not representative multicultural musical practices. In 2019, The Guardian published a story titled "'So flawed and problematic': why the term 'world music' is dead." This article is a resounding echo of the discussions on the problematization of world music that have

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[36] Tim Whelan of Transglobal Underground, interview by author, Online, September 7, 2021.

been occurring between academics, labels, and artists for years. Even though the term

"world music" continues to be scrutinized due to its problematic nature, it is still

acknowledged that the term serves a function within markets. Strut Records manager

Quinton Scott notes that, "As labels we need to guide buyers to the right place to find the

music as quickly as possible, especially in the chaotic digital marketplace. For that

reason, a general term or genre still does work as an in-point for music buyers."[37] Some

organizations have chosen to disassociate from the term "world music" altogether. The

international arts festival known as WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance) has

rebranded itself as "the worlds festival."[38] Chris Smith, the festival director of WOMAD

states:

> We understand 'world music' is ghettoizing for a lot of the artists. We are
> respectful of the term [world music] because it's our heritage, but we need to
> evolve it because the music has evolved. All that matters is championing new
> music for people to hear and enjoy. We don't want artists to be held back by
> genre we want to see them at Glastonbury and beyond.[39]

From an artistic perspective, there is a mutual understanding and agreement that

world music as a genre fails to recognize unique musical traditions, as the genre reduces a

rich diversity of musical practices into a single category. All the interviewees in this

ethnography agree that even though "world music" once served a purpose, it is a

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[37] Ammar Kalia, "'So Flawed and Problematic': Why the Term 'World Music' Is Dead," The Guardian, July 24, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jul/24/guardian-world-music-outdated-global.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

problematic and outdated term with colonial underpinnings.[40] Guitarist Adam Bulewski

from The Scorpios elaborates more on the problematic label that is "world music."

> I think world music is a terrible term. I think it's like a 1990s term. Anything that's not white Anglo Saxon is considered world music and I don't think that's good. I think things have changed a bit now, there is more cross over with more pop music like with Afrobeat from Nigeria. There is more crossover, but world music really is a term that says, "anything that's not white is world music" and I think that's not good, but it is a convenient term, and it does sell things. It's like saying to someone from Mexico whose got their music "your music is world music" and they will probably say "no its not world music, its Mexican. Its local to me it's in my town" It doesn't make any sense, but it is the way it is. It's a bad term.[41]

Musician and composer Marcello Cataldo also reflects on the meanings of world music

within a capitalist framework:

> I think the concept of world music is a way to commercialize something that otherwise can't be commercialized.[42]

This skepticism and outright disapproval of the term "world music" by its practitioners is

a reaction to the conceptualization of world music as a genre. Although the term "world

music" is deemed as outdated and problematic, it is still being used in some western

markets, including within the United States to promote non-western music.

Even though distribution platforms and musical networks reside within both

digital domains and the real world, the old schemas of "world music" still haunt these

new digital environments. Forms of cultural imperialism that emerge within Bandcamp

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[40] All interviewees mentioned an aspect of world music that they found problematic and all where in consensus that the term is pejorative due to the colonialist and exploitative framework in which world music was developed.

[41] Adam Bulewski of The Scorpios, interview by author, Online, September 8, 2021.

[42] Marcello Cataldo, interview by author, Online, September 4, 2021.

are remnants of the archaic systems that were put in place by record labels. This can still

be observed in Bandcamp since labels have the ability to distribute music on the website.
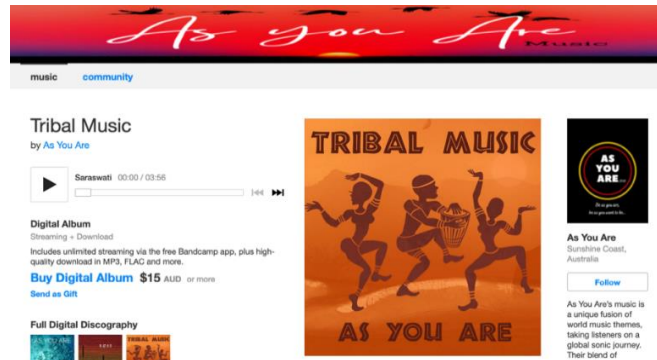

Fig. 1. An example of As You Are's "Tribal Music." Digital album cover. Published online March 23, 2021. Accessed October 27, 2021. Source: https://asyouare1.bandcamp.com/album/tribal-music.

The above example was taken from As You Are's Bandcamp page. As You Are is

a band from Sunshine Coast, Australia. This example demonstrates typical schemes used

to market diverse artists under the heading of world music. Images of nature are

juxtaposed with titles such as "Tribal Music" and album covers depicting apparently

"indigenous" women dancing in a background of brown. This caricature presents an

essentialist and stereotypical view of indigeneity, which reinforces the old tropes of

world music marketing that fetishize the "primal," "ancient," and "pure." As You Are's

biography reads as follows:

> As You Are's music is a unique fusion of world music themes, taking listeners on a global sonic journey. Their blend of electronic synths and beats blended with ancient native instruments weaves a tapestry of dream wave, trance, neofolk, tribal and world music.[43]

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43 "Tribal Music," by as You Are, accessed October 25, 2021, https://asyouare1.bandcamp.com/album/tribal-music.

As You Are uses tags such as "world, neo-folk, fusion and tribal". Their musical fusion places emphasis on typical Western pop music aesthetics such as techno inspired rhythms, simple meters, and synthesized harmonies. The music incorporates "ancient native instruments" which are used to reinvigorate their music by adding "exotic" non-western instrumentation to an otherwise western oriented pop style as heard in the song "Tribal Music."

The positionality of the artist also determines the authenticity discourses around their music and the genres according to which they may be categorized. Western artists can maintain a fluidity between musical environments if they choose to do so. This means that western artists have the power to negotiate genre identity. Non-western musicians also maintain agency, but they may be challenged and criticized when they do not reflect the expected stereotype of world musicians. Timothy Taylor describes this in *Global Pop* by stating:

> Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, and other western musicians who collaborate with musicians from other parts of the world are never described as makers of hybrids and demands of authenticity are not made of them and their music. Their music is categorized as the most prestigious of popular musics— "rock"—while the musicians with whom they work are called world beat, or something else outside the rock category.[44]

On the other hand, democratized digital distribution platforms like Bandcamp provide artistic autonomy. Bandcamp challenges these power structures by affording independent artists control over distribution, publicity, and representation. Eliminating intermediaries permits more artistic freedoms for artists in digital environments.

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[44] Timothy Dean Taylor, "Whose Hybridity?"," in *Western Music and Its Others Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000), 201.

Although Bandcamp grants artists more autonomy in publishing process, it does have drawbacks that can negatively impact artists. Bandcamp provides tiered services for artists and labels such as Bandcamp pro which allows artists to upload videos and provide a more immersive multimedia experience to its users.[45] In order to have greater multimedia interactions, artist must pay a fee for these services. Bandcamp also organizes its webpage by prioritizing best-selling artists and placing them first in the user interface, affording top selling artists more visibility while placing newer and less popular artists in the back of the queue. Bandcamp also places limits on upload size for tracks. The upload size is restricted until the artist has reached a total of $20.00 (USD) in sales.[46] Regardless of these limitations, artists maintain more artistic and musical flexibility in publishing their music through Bandcamp as opposed to using record labels. This is especially true for independent artists. The following example is taken from Iranian metal band Akvan:
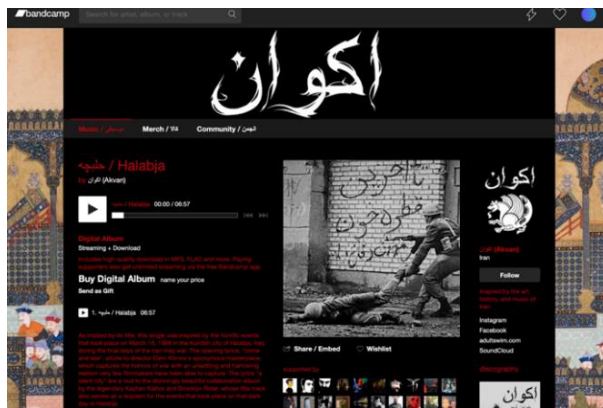
Fig.2. Akvan's Bandcamp page. Digital album cover. Published online June 11, 2021. Accessed October 27, 2021. Source: https://akvan.bandcamp.com/

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[45] "Pro," Bandcamp, accessed November 11, 2021, https://bandcamp.com/pro.
[46] "What's the Maximum Upload Size? – Bandcamp Help Center," Bandcamp Help Center (Bandcamp), accessed November 11, 2021, https://get.bandcamp.help/hc/en-us/articles/360007901993-What-s-the-maximum-upload-size-.

Akvan's biography reads as follows: "Inspired by the art, history, and music of Iran." Akvans Bandcamp page demonstrates a blend of traditional western metal aesthetics such as the use of black and white and the "scribbled" black-metal-style logo. On the fringes of the page are depictions of 17th century Persian art. Akvan's intentions are not to exoticize metal, nor do they define themselves as "hybrids"; rather, the art used in the Bandcamp page serves as an homage to the band's cultural heritage. Akvan's tags read as follows: black metal, black metal from Iran, Iran, metal, Persian, and Persian metal. Would Akvan have been described as world music in the early markets? How would audiences have perceived this music in the 1990's?

Essentialist binaries of "the west" and "the rest" in the early stages of "world music" hindered the opportunities of non-western musicians in realms of performance, genre, and representation. "World Music" as a genre does not describe any musical characteristics; rather, the genre encodes exoticist stereotypes. Tim's anecdote on performance limitations due to "genre-fying" and othering demonstrates the type of adversities non-western musicians face in a predominantly western market.

> I will describe a guy that in my opinion, had a band that at one point would have been a good support [opening band] for Metallica and the only people he could get interested in it were more of the world music industry who didn't know how to sell it because it was rock. It was rock music from Siberia. It was entirely Siberian, but it was guitars and rock music. There are bands doing it now, there is people doing it [now] that sell quite a lot of records. He was 20 years ahead of his time. So, I think there is a point to being true to yourself more than being true to the tradition and that might involve leaving it completely and that might involve moving along with it.[47]

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[47] Tim Whelan of Transglobal Underground, interview by author, Online, September 7, 2021.

In the case of the musician being described above, it is obvious that the genre world music did not properly categorize or identify the type of music and aesthetic that was being represented, yet this artist's position within the power structure determined how he was labeled and categorized. Unfortunately, race, ethnicity, and gender can predetermine how their music is represented within world music markets. Interestingly, an artist's position within the binary of "the west" and "the rest" can determine how they align with markets. Western musicians participating in the production of world music have the privilege of identifying with multiple musical traditions, while non-western musicians (specifically non-white musicians) must conform to becoming a "cultural representative" of one tradition through the lens of the west.

CHAPTER 3

MARKETING AUTHENTICITY IN DIGITAL SPACES

In this chapter, I will be discussing how authenticity is defined, constructed, and framed by audiences, artists, and markets. Authenticity plays a vital role in the marketing of world music, as it provides a "musical imaginary" for audiences to perceive notions of the "local", "pure", and "authentic." Notions of authenticity are constructed by audiences, industry, artists, and the definition of authenticity varies depending on positionality. By observing how artists frame authenticity through Bandcamp, it is possible to observe whether artists prioritize notions of authenticity or dismiss them all together.

What is authenticity?

Authenticity sustains a symbiotic relationship with the concept of world music. Audiences of the genre continually seek authenticity through the music they consume. World music audiences typically frame authenticity as something that is grounded in localized traditions and is minimally influenced by globalized musical trends and technologies. This is just one example of the many authenticities that coalesce around the genre of world music. To better understand how authenticity informs world music, it is important to understand the frameworks surrounding it. According to ethnomusicologist Sarah Wiess, definitions of authenticity revolve around constructs of individual and sociocultural experiences and are malleable and political.[48] Ethnomusicologist Martin

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[48] Sarah Weiss, "Listening to the World but Hearing Ourselves: Hybridity and Perceptions of Authenticity in World Music," *Ethnomusicology* 58, no. 3 (2014): 519, https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.58.3.0506.

Stokes defines authenticity as a "discursive trope of great persuasive power."[49] This "discursive trope" enables industry and labels to place emphasis on musical difference. Musicologist Leanne Marie Fetterley views authenticity as "… a marketing tool, a powerful discursive trope, something that many musicians and listeners believe in and, finally, a 'real thing'."[50] Fetterley's definition also positions authenticity as a marketing tool. Noah Askin and Joeri Mol take Fetterley's position further and state that authenticity has become institutionalized by the music market.

> One likely reason why authenticity has manifested itself as one of the most important concerns in the modern music industry is that it has become the linchpin underlying the institutional landscape of the music industry.[51]

World music markets operate in a similar fashion. Institutionalized authenticity in the case of world music is designed to commodify the music it is representing. To sell records or accrue clicks, marketers of world music invoke a series of tropes of authenticity which may be framed as local as opposed to global, traditional as opposed to modern, pure as opposed to hybrid, and so on. Fixation on the "authentic" and "real" and the claims of authenticity are "situated within certain expectations of genre, identity, and social and historical contexts."[52] Identity and difference construct a "musical imaginary" and build "musically-imagined communities."[53] Musical imagination is *a priori*, meaning

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[49] Martin Stokes, "Introduction," in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 7.

[50] Leanne Marie Fetterley, "'Give Me Real, Don't Give Me Fake': Authenticity, Value, and Popular Music" (PhD diss., ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007), 9.

[51] Noah Askin and Joeri Mol, "Institutionalizing Authenticity in the Digitized World of Music," *Frontiers of Creative Industries: Exploring Structural and Categorical Dynamics*, 2018, 160, https://doi.org/10.1108/s0733-558x20180000055007.

[52] Fetterley, "*'Give Me Real, Don't Give Me Fake'*", 3.

[53] Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, *Western Music and Its Others*, 35-37.

old tropes and socio-cultural stereotypes determine how these communities are imagined.[54] While discussing "fabricated" authenticities during our interview, Marcello elaborated on fabricated authenticities within the world music markets:

> Markets determine what is authentic [to the market]; meaning that authenticity is determined by what sells the best. Obviously, the definition of authenticity on an individual level is something subjective, determined individually. I've always thought of it this way; They spend thousands of dollars to tell you something is "authentic" and to try to convince thousands of people of this authenticity even though the thing they are selling is far from that. There will always be people who are unfamiliar with the product they are trying to sell. To the uninitiated, this experience can be a form of authenticity.

In world music markets, authenticity is highly valued, as these imagined perceptions of musical authenticities and perceived musical communities create an aura of "real" and "authentic." Industry personnel fabricate an authenticity for consumers that is often created in the image of these imagined authenticities. Consumers also uphold their own standards of authenticity, which permeate into global markets. Audiences' perceptions of authenticity are reinforced when labels market music back to them in terms of these perceptions.[55] Although the artists maintain their own notions of authenticity, they are still subject to western audiences' demands for, and expectations of authenticity. Ethnomusicologist Aleysia Whitmore graphically illustrates the intersections of authenticity-inauthenticity, real-false, and altruistic-commercial to demonstrate how each of these components act within the larger ecosystem of world music.[56]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Whitmore, Taylor, and Feld further elaborate on the concept of authenticity based on positionality. See chapter 1 of *Global Pop*, (Taylor, 1996), and Chapter 2 of Whitmore's *World Music and the Black Atlantic* (2020).

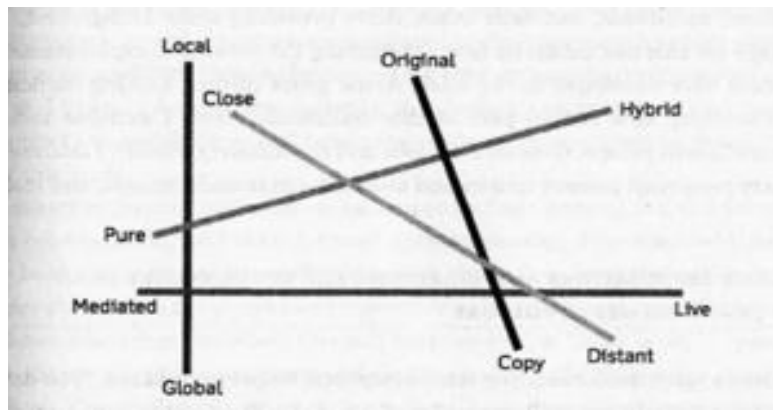[56] Whitmore, *World Music and the Black Atlantic*, 59.

Fig. 3. Axes of Authenticity, in *World Music and the Black Atlantic*, by Aleysia Whitmore (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 59.

This graph demonstrates the multiple intersecting dimensions of authenticity. Whitmore's axes of authenticity graph visually represents the dynamics of authenticity that are informed by factors of the global-local, mediated-live, pure-hybrid, close-distant, and original-copy. Whitmore's axes are easily observed within the frameworks of authenticity, as each of the points in the axes are used to determine various forms of authenticity. Whitmore gives an example of how labels mediate between audience expectations about authenticity and artists' own aesthetic preferences.

> [The German press] criticized some of the keyboards and synthesizers in the music saying that World Circuit had taken their authentic sound and wanted to put this—they called it Western poppy computer stuff—over the top of her traditional African music. Where it was actually the exact opposite and has been with quite a few of our African albums. Where the demos that you get from them are full of cheesy synthesizers and stuff. And we go the opposite way and put in more traditional rootsy-sounding instruments. So, they think that if you've actually got the authentic sound, then they would be playing the Malian stuff before World Circuit adds the cheesy and computer synthesizers and stuff like that. And then we try and make it more—almost what we would perceive to be—a rootsy sound.[57]

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[57] Ibid, 57.

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Label executives construct authenticities based on audience expectations of what they consider authentic. In the case of World Circuit, they deemed the keyboards and synthesizers too "western" and "modern" for the "traditional" African sound. In this instance of fabricated authenticity, World Circuit is looking to market a premodern sound to fulfill an expectation that Malian music should sound "rootsy," organic, and local. World Circuit figured that audiences would find the recordings that featured synthesizers to appear distant and inauthentic. To pull the audience's perception of the music closer to the local, pure, and organic, western instruments were replaced by more "rootsy" sounding native instruments. Although this is just one example of constructed authenticities, the practice of constructing authenticities based on western audiences' expectations about how non-western music should sound is still prevalent in today's world music market.

What does authenticity mean to you? How would you define it? The responses to these two rather vague questions provide a glimpse into how artists themselves perceive authenticity. The following excerpts reflect the relationship musicians have with authenticity:

> Adam: For me authenticity is I stay in the back and manage the vibe of the band, and everyone somehow fits in together. Everyone fits in very nicely. It's about people being who they are and expressing themselves, but there is a certain flavor to this band. Its Sudanese and it's like early 70s stuff. I can't explain it but when we play and we hit it right I feel like I tap into something, sort of in Sudan and that neck of the woods that's almost pre-Islamic, a couple of thousand years ago. When we do it right I kind of get this vision in my mind and I can feel in the right place and it's a very old place, very ancient place. If it doesn't go to that place, it's no good.[58]

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[58] Adam Bulewski of The Scorpios, interview by author, Online, September 8, 2021.

Jordan: I feel like there is a lot of layers to it. That word comes up a lot and it's a word like "spirituality" that means millions of things to different people so sometimes I feel like "which authenticity are you referring to?" because I think one of the things that has been important to me artistically and culturally is that the music we play is as significant as possible for the people who are creating it. We are human beings who are sharing the feeling of being alive through this. The deeper we can connect to it, it's all that we can share. In my life that's kind of how I see authenticity.[59]

For Adam and Jordan, authenticity is built around their own truths and experiences. Their art reflects their own personal identity while maintaining a cultural significance for their audience. Jordan places emphasis on the feelings of "being alive through the music," and he relates this feeling to cultural significance. Adam's interpretation of authenticity also involves an imagined space filled with a deeper essence of Sudanese culture. His imagining of a "pre-Islamic place" from "a couple of thousand years ago" is based on aural imagery. Through his performance of this musical aesthetic, he connects to a "very old place." According to Adam, he authenticates his own performance through these imagined geographical constructs and historical visions and feelings. Artists' personal authenticities such as the ones Adam and Jordan described emerge when discussing western genres but are not necessarily deemed as relevant within world music, as they can challenge exoticized and fabricated narratives of authenticity.

Popular themes of authenticity revolve around "global" connections, transnationality, and universal experiences. Projecting these themes online can be accomplished in a myriad of ways. Artists on Bandcamp often use their artist biography to convey this message. The following excerpt was taken from the band Shining Lion's Bandcamp page:

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[59] Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, interview by author, Online, September 9, 2021.

> A music tribe filling up the skies with vibrations of peace, unity revolution and love. Influences from freestyle, reggae, downtempo, hip hop, indigenous tribal, and many others. We stand for: ~Roots, Truth Freedom Revolution~[60]

Biographies like the one above are abundant within the world music page in Bandcamp. Again, the messages of universality become a selling point within the subgenres of world music such as "tribal" and "roots" music. Authenticity then, is measured in the mass appeal of liberation and purity.

Artists can either choose to embrace authenticities assigned to them or resist these notions of authenticity altogether. Timothy Taylor's *Global Pop* chapter *Strategic Inauthenticity* discusses the case of resisting prescribed and expected authenticities. Taylor writes about Youssouf N'Dour and Angelique Kidjo, two contemporary African musicians who chose to resist performing the expected authenticity of the "cosmopolitan" and "postmodern" artists with western sensibilities. For N'Dour, he writes music that sings "of the typical stories of those who are trying to be subjects of modernity and not its objects…" [61] Similarly, Kidjo also discusses the local contemporary issues that Africa faces. Kidjo does this to conscientize her audience of these issues. Like Kidjo, Mdou Moctar places the "local" through the focal point of the global to present contemporary issues.

Mdou Moctar's Bandcamp page is rendered in a simple fashion. That said, the only image used within the whole site is a powerful one. The album cover for *Afrique*

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[60] "Shining Lion and Black Feet," Shining Lion and Black Feet, accessed October 25, 2021, https://shinginglion.bandcamp.com/.

[61] Taylor, *Global Pop*, 121.

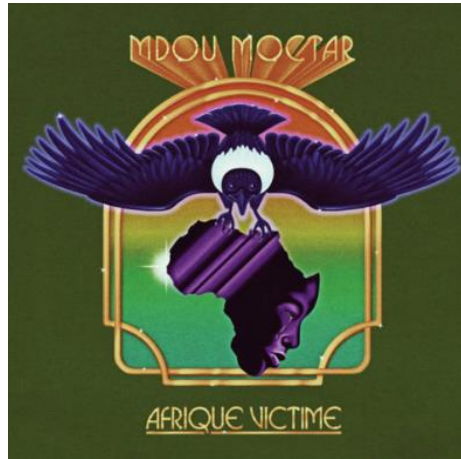*Victime* depicts a vulture grasping the continent of Africa, which contains a crying face inside of it.

Fig. 4. Modu Moctar's "Afrique Victime." Digital album cover. Published online May 21, 2021. Accessed October 27, 2021. Source:https://mdoumoctar.bandcamp.com/album/afrique-victime.

Mdou Moctar's album description on Bandcamp reads as follows:

> With "Afrique Victime" the prodigious Tuareg guitarist and songwriter rips a new hole in the sky – boldly reforging contemporary Saharan music and "rock music" by melding guitar pyrotechnics, full-blast noise, and field recordings with poetic meditations on love, religion, women's rights, inequality, and Western Africa's exploitation at the hands of colonial powers.[62]

Language demonstrates the positionality of an individual. *Who* is using the language and what type of vocabulary is being used informs us of the power dynamics at play. The representatives of Moctar's music contemporize Saharan music while placing "rock" music in scare quotes. There is no mention of "world music," "world," or "fusion" in his artist biography or the album description. Moctar's tags read as follows: rock, world, Africa, Niger, Rock, Tuareg, Agadez. This tagging demonstrates that while

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[62] "Afrique Victime, by Mdou Moctar," Mdou Moctar, accessed October 25, 2021, https://mdoumoctar.bandcamp.com/album/afrique-victime.

Moctar positions himself as a rock musician, there is still an inscription of old marketing

tropes, possibly generated algorithmically or by the record label.

Whose authenticity? Justifying authenticity through race and ethnicity

> Whenever we get interviewed… For example, we got interviewed by the BBC
> once and they were like "oh no, is it okay if we just talk to these guys [the
> Sudanese musicians]?" And I'm like "yeah, whatever" because I don't give a shit,
> but they always go for the Sudanese guys, and we do sell it. So, we have the
> Sudanese guys in the front, and we are supporting them [in the back]. If there
> were no Sudanese guys in the band, I don't think we'd be where it is because they
> are so interesting. There is also the fact that the backing band is good and gets
> into it. Let's be honest, there is a currency by the fact that you are from Sudan, or
> you are "authentic." So as the white people in the band, we stay in the background
> and support them. They are the ones selling it not us. So that's a very interesting
> thing. We both gain from each other. All music and all culture have happened that
> way.[63]

Adam's experience with the BBC reporters is an antithesis to the cultural

imperialist narrative of exploitation and exotification, but ironically this encounter also

illustrates how the market's fetish with ethnicity can be used as a selling point by non-

western artists. To the press, "authenticity" was measured by racialization. Adam

identifies himself as an Anglo-English musician. He perceives that the press does not find

him "exotic" enough, so they interview his Sudanese bandmates instead. Racialization

and exoticization of non-white musicians assigns meaning and contextualizes an

authenticity.[64] Ethnomusicologist Timothy Taylor observes that authenticities themselves

are constructed by stylized differences of ethnicities, in which the polarization of 'non-

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[63] Adam Bulewski of The Scorpios, interview by author, Online, September 8, 2021.
[64] Jo Haynes, "Configuring Music and Race," in *Music, Difference, and the Residue of Race* (London:
Routledge, 2014), 59.

white' and 'ethnic' reinforce perceptions of authenticity.[65] In Adam's interaction with the press, his Sudanese bandmates become the point of attraction due to this racialized authenticity. Adam is aware of this ethnic "currency" that his Sudanese bandmates hold. Adam's own experiences cannot be minimized, as he projects his own authenticities and experiences that are valuable in the collective. Unfortunately for Adam, the BBC reproduces categories used in marketing world music to sell the "exotic". On the other hand, Adam's bandmates can use their ethnicity as a journalistic point of appeal, thus piquing interest in European markets. Like Adam, Jordan also points out how racialization is propped up by the world music industry.

> The system exists to be a kind of zoo of race representation, and they keep telling us "No! You aren't being a good race representative zoo exhibit," and it's accurate feedback. Artists today aren't interested… I think the people who find themselves doing that get demoralized and quit because it's humiliating and debasing.[66]

Jordan's analogy of race relations to a zoo is a comment on the audiences' expectation of race in the genre of world music. Audiences use ethnicity and race to authenticate music. During Jordan's interview I asked him if he felt like he was a representative of a cultural tradition. I posed this question to all my interviewees. Responses varied, but there was a general anxiety about the topic of incorporating race and ethnicity to discussions of authenticities. It is interesting to note that one of the interviewees stated that they experienced "impostor syndrome." In the quote below, Jordan elaborates on how racialization in world music markets has negatively impacted him personally.

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[65] Taylor, *Global Pop*, 126-128.
[66] Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, interview by author, Online, September 9, 2021.

…We were invited to play a showcase, the Folk Alliance International Showcase, which is a yearly thing. It's a booking showcase and it's a first time we've done one of those we were working with a booking agent. We even got some grant money to help with the trip and we got what seemed like a favorable spot at this weekend-long thing. I had some feedback from another musician I knew who was on the board and said that a lot of the members of the board thought they should fire us from that because the band had a non-Hispanic member [myself], and it's interesting the whole kind of theme of the conference had some theme about social justice and it really struck me that the people running the festival knew very little about music culture and traditions and how things work. They were just kind of embracing those values in a very superficial way, without really learning much about what's going on and making a real decision in response to what artists are creating. It was more like, "look at your skin, I've got a problem with that."[67]

Jordan also commented on the impostor syndrome that other artists experienced by stating: "It's interesting hearing that other artists say that. I feel like that says a lot about our system. People who are active in these cultural traditions are constantly being told they're impostors." Positionality plays an important role in performing authenticity as geographic origin, race, ethnicity, and gender can project authenticity or disavow it. Authenticity through race catalyzes racial bias which creates the "impostor syndrome" described by the interviewees. Transnationalism adds another layer of complexity, as audiences conceptualize culture as static and "frozen in time." These complexities raise the question, whose music is it and who has the right to perform it?

Geography and authenticity

Music informs how people imagine geography, space, and place. When listening to music, audiences may imagine the sounds as emerging from, and representative of a geographic place of origin. Music's tie with geography and locality can be used within

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[67] Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, interview by author, Online, September 9, 2021.

world music markets to promote artists as authentic representatives of these places. But the places from which audiences perceive the music to emerge are also imaginaries, reflecting their own, possibly romanticized ideas about what these places must be like. Record labels capitalize on these preconceived and romanticized notions of geography through sonic tourism.

Aural imagination combined with album art and liner notes encourage listeners to imagine geography and locale.[68] Sonic tourism remains a popular selling point for labels. Sonic tourism is promoted through region-specific albums and compilations. Audiences maintain a "brand loyalty among a fan base that looks to the record label as a source of geopolitical knowledge."[69]

Due to this loyal fanbase and the trust instilled between labels and consumers, labels are perceived as "cultural informants" and "experts" of the "local" music which they are presenting. Residing within the world music section of Bandcamp is Putumayo records. Putumayo is a record label from New Orleans that is well known for their world music compilations.[70] Putumayo's colorful, animated album covers portray a playful universality that projects a sense of multiculturalism and cultural exchange.

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[68] Kheshti, Roshanak. "Touching Listening: The Aural Imaginary in the World Music Culture Industry." *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2011): 717. https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2011.0035.
[69] Ibid, 715–16.
[70] "Putumayo World Music," Putumayo World Music, accessed October 9, 2021, https://putumayo.bandcamp.com/.
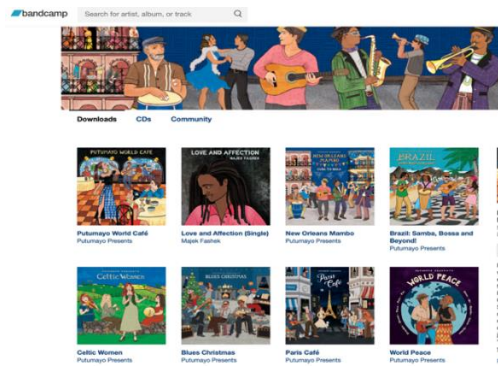
Fig. 5. Putumayo's Bandcamp page. Accessed October 26, 2021. Source: https://putumayo.bandcamp.com/.

Putumayo's Bandcamp biography reads as follows: "Putumayo travels the world in search of exceptional songs from Congo to Cuba, Rome to Rio, New Orleans to Nova Scotia. Putumayo's meticulously researched and curated musical journeys are 'guaranteed to make you feel good!'" Putumayo projects authenticity by encouraging listeners to use their aural imagination to perceive the music as iconic of its place of origin, as grounded in a tradition that has developed in that place and remains true to it. An example of this would be Putumayo's *Paris Café* album. The album cover depicts a moonlit night with the Eiffel Tower in the background. Street musicians are playing outdoors near a café where a couple is sitting outdoors. The buildings that surround them are typical of architecture found in Paris.
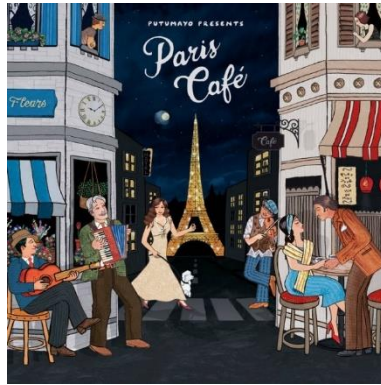
Fig. 6. "Paris Café" album cover. Published online October 18, 2019. Accessed October 27, 2021. Source: https://putumayo.bandcamp.com/album/paris-caf-2.

This type of imagery is used to commodify the "traditional" music of France. The album's images are used to depict the local as it places you within the middle of the social interaction among street musicians and Parisian residents. The images of the street musicians cement the concepts of locality and authenticity.

Emphasis on the local in world music is due to the transnationalism of world music. Guilbault's "On Redefining the 'Local' Through World Music," elaborates on the relationship between local and global dimensions of music. Guilbault states that world music markets have the capacity to "reposition local cultures to which they are associated, by being part of a world movement that advances the desire of every nation not only to be recognized but also to participate in the workings of global economics and power."[71] Bandcamp demonstrates this interaction of local music with global markets. Motives behind representing the local go beyond the projection of authenticity. Sometimes these motives are to elevate the local musical practices on a global scale.

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[71] Guilbault, "On Redefining the 'Local' Through World Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, 43.

Exposing local traditions to global markets fosters the creation of a larger community of

musicians and audiences that want to keep local traditions alive and relevant. For the

band Lone Piñon, placing traditional New Mexican music in the forefront of the global

community is vital in maintaining this musical tradition relevant.

> So much of our project is about or has been about taking this tradition which has kind of been left in past generations. It hasn't been updated or used in a relevant context by musicians, especially professional musicians in our generation. So, a lot of our emphasis has been on professionalizing [the music]. What happened to Mariachi that [caused it] to become a professionalized music and why can't that happen with northern New Mexican traditions? What happened with Bluegrass? Reggae? All these regional things that are [now] considered world music? How do we do that? Part of me feels like that's a great service to create a voice for this [music] and give it a seat at the table of "world music," and then part of me feels like "is this just ushering this tradition into an exploitative system?" I'm not sure but the jury is still out there as to if that system will consistently provide dignity or humiliation.[72]

For Jordan, introducing the local musical traditions into the global sphere is a way

to preserve and promote the music of northern New Mexico. Placing this music on

Bandcamp not only maintains a digitized rendition of rich musical traditions, but it also

informs the global community of the unique regional musical practices. New Mexico's

rich musical history is shaped by migration, colonialism, revolution, and cultural

renaissance. Unique musical styles have formed over time as popular music found its way

into the traditional and folk musics. Lone Piñon's own unique interpretations of

traditional Northern New Mexican music not only exemplify preservation of traditional

music, but also the development and evolution of northern New Mexican genres. Their

Bandcamp biography reads as follows: "Lone Piñon is an acoustic conjunto from New

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[72] Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, interview by author, Online, September 9, 2021.

Mexico whose music celebrates the diversity and integrity of their region's cultural roots." Lone Piñon's artist page contains album art that is reminiscent of the traditional New Mexican art style of Spanish colonial, Indigenous and Hispanic traditions.
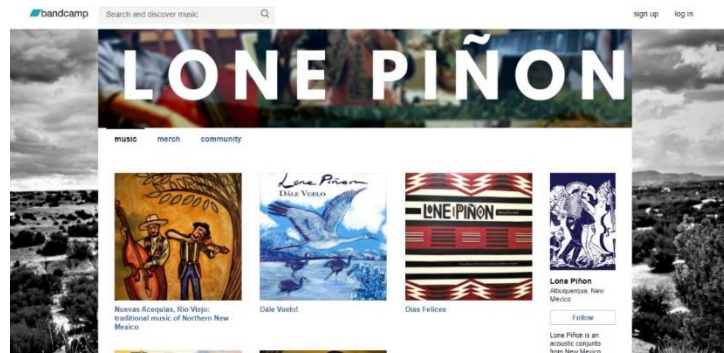

Fig. 7. Lone Piñon's Bandcamp page. Accessed October 27, 2021. Source: https://lone-pinon.bandcamp.com/.

Bridging the gap between communal traditional folk music and performance-based practice is a vital part of Lone Piñon's artistic vision. The focus of "roots music" and the artists' appreciation towards its tradition and practitioners is further elaborated through Bandcamp's track information feature, which enables artists to add "virtual liner notes" to specific tracks and albums. These liner notes contain information on the style and historical origins of the music and credits its practitioners and their lineage.

"Antonito" is what we call an unnamed cutilio from a recording of violinist Adelaido Chavez (born in 1872 in Antonito, Colorado) with his younger brother Adolfo Chavez on guitar. The Chavez' were master musicians who were recorded in August of 1940 by Juan B. Rael, whose recordings have been made available online through the Library of Congress.

"El Rodeo" and "El Hermitaño" are from the repertoire of Macario "Max" Apodaca of Rociada, New Mexico, the late husband of our mentor Antonia Apodaca. Max passed away before our time and never made a commercial recording, but we heard his music through home recordings that were preserved by Ken Keppeler and Jeanie McLerie (who perform under the name "Bayou Seco"). He was an excellent violinist who learned his family's music tradition as a child; when the Apodacas moved to Wyoming for several decades he played with a German dance band and must have incorporated even more Country and Western fiddle elements into his playing. The rhythmic pauses he employs between sections are a hallmark of his style and characteristic of Northern New Mexico dance fiddling.

Fig. 8. Lone Piñon's virtual liner notes. Published online December 15, 2019. Accessed October 27, 2021. Source: https://lone-pinon.bandcamp.com/track/el-rodeo-antonito-el-hermita-o-cutilios.

Lone Piñon's Bandcamp profile demonstrates that it is possible to negotiate artistic representation online while educating listeners and giving them a framework on musical traditions. These types of artist profiles are not directly based on resistance to the western constructs of world music; rather, they aim to educate listeners about musical traditions and pay homage to the lineage of musicians that kept these musical traditions alive. For Jordan, giving the local a more global presence is a way of preserving and promoting communal and local musical traditions. On the other hand, Jordan is aware of the machinations of the world music industry and the possible negative consequences of globalizing a local tradition.

How do the local and the global relate to one another? In the case of world music, contemporary local musicians may be influenced by global markets, which influence the local musical aesthetics in turn (think of Tuareg rock). Outside of monetary capital, local and global also produce cultural hybridization through immigration, assimilation, and acculturation. This can be heard through musical practice, as music remains the most "malleable and mobile of all cultural forms" and is "more predisposed to fusion and mixing" than other arts.[73] Transnationalism and multicultural environments are the ideal incubators for the blending of musical traditions.

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[73] Inglis and Robertson 2005; Taylor 1997 as quoted in Jo Haynes, "Configuring Music and Race," in *Music, Difference, and the Residue of Race* 2014, 87.

CHAPTER 4

HYBRIDIZATION AND APPROPRIATION

In this chapter, I will be discussing musical hybridity and appropriation. Musical appropriation demonstrates the asymmetrical power dynamics between dominant cultures and subcultures. The use of sampling and technology is a prevalent practice of appropriation, and it is problematic since authors of the source material are typically never compensated or credited. Hybridity in music is a highly politicized concept. Discourses of power dynamics and nationalism often emerge in the discussion of hybridity. In the realms of world music, the authenticity of hybrid forms is often debated by audiences, yet hybrid forms are themselves are viewed as their own forms of authenticity. This chapter will explore how artist use hybrid forms as a form of re-appropriation, as well as demonstrate how the practices of appropriation still emerge in the era of digital streaming and "world music 2.0."

The term "hybridity" is used to "denote the mixing of elements within contemporary culture, identities, interactions and artefacts (such as music, fashion and film), which is celebrated, feared or condemned."[74] Trade, migration, diaspora, colonialism, and geopolitical events influence hybridity due to the movement of people and culture. In (post-)colonial contexts, musicians can combine elements of the colonizer's music with elements of native and indigenous music. For musicians, this serves as a method of reappropriation. By combining colonial music, which is often

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[74] Haynes, *Music, Difference, and the Residue of Race*, 85.

associated with prestige and power, with elements of music that is marked as local or indigenous, musicians create new forms of resistance.[75]

Cameroonian composer Francis Beybey's modernist music approached western musical idioms as a means of re-appropriation. His goal was the revitalization and renaissance of African music. In an interview with Chris May, Beybey states "What I'm aiming to do is to use Western technology to invigorate African music and spread its message internationally."[76] Beybey's music was reactionary to the colonial prejudice and power structures surrounding the continent and its music.[77]

> Many of the foreign influences that have penetrated Africa will be incorporated into a new form of black African art. This form of initiation may be deplored by those with deep-seated conservative or racist tendencies, but far from resulting in a bastardized and damaging modernism, we believe this mutation will breathe new life into African art and will demonstrate the triumph of humanism and universality over esoteric sterility… it is imperative that the future of African music be based on the idea of development and not merely upon preservation.[78]

Beybey's use of the colonizer's technology and song forms are a way for him to present African music as a modern and evolving artform. This re-appropriation challenges old ideals of perceived premodernity in African music. For Beybey, his musical fusions are a re-imagination of African culture in which themes of humanism and universality heal the scars left by colonial powers.

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[75] Timothy Dean Taylor, "Strategies of Resistance," in *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 69-94.

[76] Chris May, "The Electric Futurism of Cameroonian Trailblazer Francis Bebey," The Vinyl Factory, October 9, 2018, https://thevinylfactory.com/features/electric-futurism-francis-bebey/.

[77] Rob Fitzpatrick, "The 101 Strangest Records on Spotify: Francis Bebey – AFRICAN Electronic Music 1975-1982," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, January 30, 2013), https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2013/jan/30/101-strangest-spotify-francis-bebey.

[78] Chris May, "The Electric Futurism", 2018.

From the perspective of western audiences, hybridity may offer a new and "exotic" flavor of western music, as it is dependent on the interplay of cultural differences and colonial constructs that reinforce them.[79] Ironically, the search for difference also produces sameness due to the derivative and reductive nature of marketing, which commodifies difference and diversity on a global scale.[80] Genres such as new-age often appropriate non-western sounds to reinvigorate western pop music. This formula of integrating unique non-western sounds and instrumentation creates music of a similar aesthetic, thus producing a sameness through the search for difference. Discourses around hybridity are informed by industry, music journalists, and audiences.[81] These discourses, according to Taylor, "represent a variety of musics and other cultural forms, discourses, political strategies, and identity conceptions."[82]

Hybridity is a highly politicized phenomenon, as it promotes transgressive narratives that challenge essentialist and nationalistic ideologies while creating a space for evolving political formations.[83] Hybridity challenges nationalism because it promotes transnationalism and musical multiculturalism. Due to the transnational nature of hybridity, it is often interpreted as a less authentic form of music as it may be deemed to lose its purity and to stray from its "original" form. Fear of hybridization is brought about

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[79] Haynes, *Difference, and the Residue of Race*, 85.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Timothy D. Taylor. "Some Versions of Difference: Discourses of Hybridity in Transnational Musics." *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World*, ed. Ronald Radano, Charles McGovern, and Timothy D. Taylor (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 140.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

by nationalist sentiments that oppose the destruction and dilution of "culture" through hybridization.[84]

In Bandcamp, many artists use the word "hybrid" to identify the sonic qualities of their music. For consumers, "hybrid" is a place of reference. Hybridity informs audiences of the presence of western music mixed with a musical "other". Within hybrid forms, the superculture takes precedence over the subculture that is being used to "reinvigorate western forms."[85] Artists can interpret hybridity either as a marketing ploy or as a legitimate form of musical aesthetic. During my interview with The Scorpios, I asked Adam about how his band perceives hybridity and its performance as well as how their audiences feel about it. Adam responded by saying:

> A lot of Sudanese people love it; some Sudanese people don't like it because we might just take some lyrics of a song and mash it up and do something else with it, and they don't like that. Most western audiences don't know what is being sung, they don't care, they just like the flavor of it, the sound of it, but it does seem to cross boundaries. Even though we are world music we aren't fully world music. We do seem to cross into jazz, kind of the psychedelic thing, it's not fully Afrobeat either, it's a bit like that but not fully.[86]

Adam's experience informs us of the audience's perception of hybridity. The Scorpios originated from Sudan but due to the Islamic fundamentalist takeover of the country in the eighties, all the bandmembers fled from Sudan to London. Adam began working with The Scorpios and he later joined the band as their guitarist.[87] In the case of

[84] Ibid.

[85] Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh "Introduction," in *Western Music and Its Others Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000.), 8-14.

[86] Adam Bulewski of The Scorpios, interview by author, Online, September 8, 2021.

[87] "Introducing: Sudanese/London Collective the Scorpios Bring Life-Affirming Soul & Vintage Psych Funk," Le Guess Who? September 10, 2018, https://www.leguesswho.nl/news/introducing-sudaneselondon-collective-the-scorpios-bring-life-affirming-soul-vintage-psych-funk.

The Scorpios, reception is mixed, especially amongst Sudanese audience members. Adam points out a dichotomy between the western audience and the Sudanese audience. This dichotomy is produced by the notions of "cultural ownership" that are assumed by the Sudanese members of the audience. In this scenario, authenticity of the music may become contested. Is it really The Scorpios' job to be cultural representatives of Sudanese music? Does the hybridization of Sudanese traditions with Western musical forms dilute their supposed authentic and original form? In our interview, Adam pointed out that the band's sound developed organically. The band is not concerned with how they project a *particular authenticity*, rather, how they project *their own authenticity* through their music.

Hybrid forms can themselves be constructed as authentic forms of music, as musicologist Simon Frith states in *The Discourse of World Music*. An example of this new form of authenticity through hybridity is Bhangra music. Bhangra is a South Asian popular music genre that incorporates components of contemporary electronic dance music and traditional Punjabi music.[88] Bhangra music is often described in terms of the "East meets West" trope to emphasize difference and cement the notions of musical hybridity through musical blending. According to Taylor, the label of "hybrid" has been assigned to the music due to the hegemony of major labels and the way audiences describe the music.

> …discourses of hybridity play an important role in this music, in part because of the hegemony of the major labels and retailers, and in part because musicians who create bhangra remix music and the listeners who listen to it use the term

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[88] Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism*, 149-151.

"hybridity" to describe both the music and their conceptions of identity as diasporic South Asians.[89]

Taylor also states that audiences' expectations of authenticity have shifted from "pure," "local," and "organic," to an authenticity created by hybridity.[90] Identity is also part of a much larger discussion of hybridity, as hybridity can stoke nationalistic debates over musical practices and their origins. The following example elaborates more on the interaction between the discourse of nationalism and hybridity.

During our discussion about hybrid music, Adam brought up an interesting discussion about a group of musicians and individuals who argue for or against the notion of hybridity on Facebook. In this discussion, Adam mentioned that the owner of Ostinato records did not like the term "hybrid" or "world music" and had very anti-western sentiments regarding music.

> I had discussions on Facebook with one guy from Ostinato Records [Vik Sohonie]. He doesn't like it [hybrid music] because he has an anti-western sentiment. A lot of people complain about it and a lot of world music is definitely ripped off and appropriated. There are little arguments on Facebook about a few French labels that are stealing a lot of Guinean music and just making a ton of money out of it and not paying any money to the artists. So, there is a sense of the west controlling the other musics and controlling it in many ways, but at the same time for a lot of people [that are] not really that informed about music [especially western audiences], world music enables them to get in the door. I don't think it's a problem.[91]

The person in question, Vik Sohonie, states:

> In the last two decades, the West's dominance over popular culture and monopoly on information has slowly but steadily declined, and that vacuum has been filled in a number of ways – through the rise of news networks dedicated to the Global South's point of view, and through record labels. Western media, academia, and

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[89] Timothy Dean Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism*, 146.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Adam Bulewski of The Scorpios, interview by author, Online, September 8, 2021.

its cultural companies taught us how to view the world, what to focus on and what to ignore, who to hate and who to love. That's all changing.[92]

Vik Sohonie founded Ostinato Records in New York in 2016. Sohonie's professional background is eclectic, and his journalistic experience inspired him to establish Ostinato Records. Sohonie created Ostinato Records to resist what he saw as the colonial power structure of western music markets.

> As a former journalist, I saw the dominant worldview by which most mainstream news, and journalism schools, operate – it's deeply outdated and has no place in 2017. So, I aim, through Ostinato Records releases, to tell stories that challenge notions and perceptions that have wrongly coloured the global imagination.[93]

Sohonie's mission is not one of re-appropriation or promoting the hybrid; rather, it is one of representing "raw" and "unadulterated" music from different parts of the globe. To Sohonie, such music embodies authenticity based on purity of origins. Sohonie maintains the position of a cultural intermediary, but he states that his goal is to create "global news stories" instead of selling records.[94] Sohonie also states that recordings of non-western music should be treated as cultural artifacts, as they tell stories of people and places. Ostinato Records' Bandcamp biography page reads as follows: "what the truth sounds like." This Bandcamp slogan is a claim to authenticity as it associates truth with purity and originality. Sohonie presents a type of musical antithesis within Bandcamp. His label resides amongst other labels that promote what he is trying to challenge. Being

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[92] "EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: 5 Mins With… Vik Sohonie," UK Music PR, Press & Radio plugging, Music Promotion and Band Promotion, Publicity, Event Promotion, Label, London Music PR (The Playground, February 27, 2017), https://www.theplayground.co.uk/exclusive-interview-5-mins-with-vik-sohonie/.

[93] Ibid.

[94] "New York's Ostinato Records Use Music to Change Minds," WePresent, September 14, 2021, https://wepresent.wetransfer.com/story/ostinato-records-what-the-truth-sounds-like/.

on Bandcamp also contradicts projections of purity of origin due to the commercialization of local music on a global level.

New technology, same old appropriation: Deep Forest

Cultural appropriation is problematic within the genre of "world music," as the act of appropriation distorts musical meaning by recontextualizing musical sounds while giving appropriators the ability to capitalize on power asymmetries. Western music is positioned above non-western musics as the subculture provides music for the dominant culture. Technology reinforces this disparity, as technocratic societies have the facility to mass produce and commercialize musical practices. Digitization and commodification of cultural musics and traditions establishes power relations in which artists, record labels, and academia play a part. An infamous case study of appropriation is Deep Forest's "Sweet Lullaby."

During the process of reproduction, the cultural context of musical sounds slowly erodes through the recontextualization of its reproduction. Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld describes this process as schizophonic mimesis.[95] New age band Deep Forest's "Sweet Lullaby" was originally sourced from an ethnomusicological recording from the Baegu tradition from the Solomon Islands. The lullaby, known by its original name as "Rorogwela," was recontextualized through the process of reproduction and sampling to serve a new purpose: cultural commodification. This specific case of schizophonic

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[95] Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, "Introduction," in *Western Music and Its Others Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000.), 28-29.

mimesis remains infamous within academic communities, as it serves as a classic case study of cultural appropriation and the ethics behind sampling music. Deep Forest's Bandcamp biography reads as follows:

> Innovatively fusing traditional ethnic musics with state-of-the-art rhythms, the work of Deep Forest was best typified by their 1993 smash "Sweet Lullaby," which brought together the contemporary sounds of ambient techno with a haunting traditional lullaby from the Solomon Islands. The project was primarily the work of the French keyboardists and programmers Eric Mouquet and Michael Sanchez; after the latter returned from Africa with boxes of records he'd picked up across the continent, he and Mouquet began sampling the native sounds for use with their atmospheric dance tracks, and with the aid of producer Dan Lacksman, their eponymous debut LP appeared in 1993. Propelled by the international hit "Sweet Lullaby," Deep Forest was a surprise success; Mouquet and Sanchez soon began work on a follow-up, this time exploring such areas as Mongolia, India, and Hungary, recording several tracks with singer Marta Sebestyen…. ~ Jason Ankeny.[96]

Deep Forest's biography contains various examples of world music marketing schemas. Jason Ankeny demonstrates the formulaic way in which world music is marketed. Words that exemplify authenticity and mystique such as "haunting" and "traditional" are juxtaposed with "state-of-the-art rhythms "and "contemporary" further emphasizing a cultural imperialist narrative. This narrative is further advanced by the implementation of technology as there is an enforced and stereotypical binary between the developed and technologically driven first world and the "undeveloped, primitive, third world."

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[96] "Deep Brazil, by Deep Forest Featuring Flavio Dell Isola," Deep Forest, accessed October 25, 2021, https://deepforest1.bandcamp.com/album/deep-brasil.

Fig. 9. "Sweet Lullaby" Brazilian version? Released January 1, 2008. Accessed October 24, 2021. Source: https://deepforest1.bandcamp.com/track/sweet-lullaby-brasilian-version.

Deep Forest continues to further recontextualize "Rorogwela" into a universal theme. Although the "Brazilian" version varies musically, it still contains the same lyrics as the original version. The song itself consists of bossa nova style guitar themes and natural rainforest sounds as well as sounds of distant "native" chants in the introduction. Regardless of its recontextualization and reinterpretation, the themes of tribalism and purity through universality remain the same. The album cover for *Deep Brazil* further epitomizes the themes of tribalism, purity, and innocence by displaying a picture of a "tribal" child staring intensely into the camera. Deep Forest's case of cultural appropriation for the purpose of commodifying difference elucidates how recording technology facilitates this process while positioning the samplers as the music's authors.

The new-old media

Ethnomusicologist David Novak coined the term "World Music 2.0" to refer to a new and technologically driven form of appropriation. World music 2.0 does not involve

old patterns of appropriation such as the incorporation of global sounds to their works such as the case of Deep Forest. World Music 2.0 involves the redistribution of existing recordings of regional pop musics.[97] Novak calls this the "new-old media." Technological mediation is becoming more difficult due to the accessibility of technology on a larger scale. According to Novak, technological mediation has been replaced with the process of remediation. This remediation creates a new media environment and possibly new ownership of "old media."[98]

        Sahel Sounds Compilations is an American record label from Portland, Oregon that specializes in musical compilations from across the globe. Self-proclaimed "amateur-ethnomusicologist," Christopher Kirkley, collects field recordings from North Africa as well as other pre-produced musical recordings and incorporates them into compilation records.[99] One of the more interesting albums in the Sahel Sounds library is *Music from Saharan Cell Phones*. The album description in Bandcamp reads as follows:

> Music from Saharan cellphones is a compilation of music collected from memory cards of cellular phones in the Saharan desert. In much of West Africa, cellphones are used as all-purpose multimedia devices. In lieu of personal computers and high-speed internet, the knockoff cellphones house portable music collections, playback songs on tinny built-in speakers, and swap files in a very literal peer to peer Bluetooth wireless transfer. The songs chosen for the compilation were some of the highlights -- music that is immensely popular on the unofficial mp3/cellphone network from Abidjan to Bamako to Algiers but have limited or no commercial release. They're also songs that tend towards this new world of self-production -- Fruity Loops, home studios, synthesizers, and Autotune. In 2010, various versions of Saharan cellphone music were released on cassette. Many of the songs were unlabeled, giving no insight to their mysterious origins.

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[97] David Novak, "The Sublime Frequencies of New Old Media," *Public Culture* 23, no. 3 (2011): 604, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-1336435.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Katey Trnka, "Sahel Sounds: Connecting Cultures across Continents," Vortex Music Magazine (Vortex Music Magazine, August 19, 2019), https://www.vrtxmag.com/articles/sahel-sounds-connecting-cultures-across-continents/.

In the past year, the artists have been tracked down to collaborate on a commercial release. As such, 50% of the proceeds go directly to the artists.[100]

Kirkley's compilation albums resemble Sublime Frequencies, which is another record label that obtained old tapes of local musicians to create compilation albums and distribute them globally.[101] In the case of Sahel Sounds, old cell phones replace Sublime Frequencies' old tapes. This example of remediation maintains the "new-old" dichotomy by transferring old cell phone recordings and music into the new streaming environment of Bandcamp. Within the context of artistic compensation, this transfer of music raises the question of whether the music's creators are being fairly compensated. Kirkley's role within the infrastructure is as a musical intermediary since he does not produce music but facilitates the transfer of musical traditions to a more global audience.

Kirkley attempts to maintain transparency and fairness by stating that a commercial release of the album was possible due to a collaboration between the label and the artists. Kirkley also states that 50 percent of the sales would go to the original recording artist. Although the intention behind the commercial collaboration with the original artists was designed to be fair compensation, the remediation of "old media" into new forms of distribution such as streaming leads to a new set of challenges for non-western and contemporary artists. The integration of old media into new technologies creates challenges of equal representation in the world of music streaming and distribution.

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[100] "Music from Saharan Cellphones, by Various Artists," Sahel Sounds Compilations, accessed October 25, 2021, https://sahelsoundscompilations.bandcamp.com/album/music-from-saharan-cellphones.
[101] Novak, *The Sublime Frequencies of New Old Media*, 603- 624.

CHAPTER 5

MIR AND TECHNOCRACIES: THE NEW EMPIRE

In this chapter, I will be discussing how the field of music information retrieval

(MIR) and algorithms impact the distribution and representation of the world music

genre. The lack of algorithmic transparency coupled with the homogenized field of MIR

has led to a bias favoring western popular music. The power structures and hierarchies

that are maintained by the technocratic forces are reminiscent of the power structures

observed in the world music industry. This chapter will discuss ethical considerations of

artistic representation through algorithms as well as the drawbacks of recommender

systems in the genre of world music.

Music information retrieval (MIR) is a field of computer science and informatics

that specializes in the use of computer algorithms to classify, categorize and distribute

music.[102] MIR is a multidisciplinary field that incorporates the studies of acoustics,

psychoacoustics, signal processing, computer science, musicology, informatics and

machine learning and is widely used in many music recommender and archival

applications.[103] Spotify, Apple Music, Shazam, and Sound Hound, among other

applications and platforms, implement MIR algorithms for user recommendations and

musical identifications. What do "world music" and music information retrieval have in

common? How does one inform the other and most importantly, why does this matter?

To better understand these questions, it is essential to recognize that both the frameworks

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[102] J. Stephen Downie, "The Music Information Retrieval Evaluation Exchange (2005-2007): A Window into Music Information Retrieval Research," *Acoustical Science and Technology* 29, no. 4 (2008): 247 https://doi.org/10.1250/ast.29.247.
[103] Ibid.

of world music and the field of MIR are grounded in neo-colonial power relations that may marginalize artists and may reproduce dehumanizing stereotypes.

The ubiquitous nature of technology has led to algorithms becoming an integral part of society. The use of algorithms in the public sphere has led to ethical concerns about how algorithms interpret and implement social data.[104] Algorithms impact individuals in the real world. From healthcare to policing, algorithms have been rapidly and extensively introduced into various social environments. Ethical concerns about how data is represented and interpreted call for a framework of digital ethics and ethical algorithmic design. Such a framework requires an interdisciplinary collaboration that promotes a more equitable digital environment for all. Unfortunately, many computer scientists and MIR researchers and developers my not reflect on the ethics of musical and cultural representation.

Computer scientist Cynthia Dwork was asked in an interview from the New York Times: "Whose responsibility is it to ensure that algorithms or software are not discriminatory?" Dwork's response was as follows:

> This is better answered by an ethicist. I'm interested in how theoretical computer science and other disciplines can contribute to an understanding of what might be viable options.[105]

It is evident that Dwork's emphasis is solely on the technology behind algorithms, not the social or ethical ramifications behind them. Some developers may remain

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[104] Kirsten Martin, "Ethical Implications and Accountability of Algorithms," *Journal of Business Ethics* 160, no. 4 (July 2018): 835-850, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3921-3.

[105] Claire Cain Miller, "Algorithms and Bias: Q. and A. with Cynthia Dwork," The New York Times (The New York Times, August 10, 2015), https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/upshot/algorithms-and-bias-q-and-a-with-cynthia-dwork.html.

complacent about digital ethics due to the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration and the perception that algorithms maintain a level of objectivity and "fairness".[106] The "blank slate"[107] approach to algorithms "suggest[s] minimal responsibility for the developers who craft the algorithm."[108] Attitudes towards ethical implementation of algorithms tend to remain loose and relaxed when addressing algorithms in musical contexts.

Is it necessary to maintain digital ethics within streaming platforms? Besides compensation, what are the consequences artists face in real life? It may seem like the consequences are small. As Pierre-Nicholas Schwab, PhD in digital marketing and marketing researcher of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, states:

> There is a big difference between a music recommendation service and a news recommendation service. What are the consequences of biased recommendations in a subscription-based service like Spotify? Getting a track recommended that you may not like and will skip. The consequences are small for the consumer.[109]

Sentiments like the one above demonstrates how the minimization of music to a simple commodity enforces apathetic attitudes towards artists and musical traditions. This minimization can lead to the marginalization and misrepresentation of artists within digital streaming platforms since music is treated as a commodity instead of a cultural practice. Consequently, this type of attitude, albeit having "small consequences for the consumer," has a much bigger impact on artists. Asher Chodo's dissertation *Solving and Dissolving Musical Affection: A Critical Study of Spotify and Automated Music*

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[106] Martin, *Ethical Implications*, 836.

[107] Referring to algorithms as "blank slates" is a popularized term in computer science that reflects the algorithm's objectivity. This objectivity establishes the perception of "fairness" by the algorithm.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Pierre-Nicolas Schwab as quoted in Chodos, "Workshop on fairness and ethics in recommendation systems," September 18, 2018, https://www. Intotheminds.com/blog/en/workshop-on-fairness-in-recommendation-systems/.

Recommendation in the 21st Century, reflects on the possible ramifications and concerns of algorithmic bias in recommender systems:

> Will recommendation systems lead to musical "filter bubbles" where we hear the same stuff over and over again? If so, are there toxic cultural effects one might expect to result from that narrowing? If recommendation systems are just as "bad" at recognizing salient features of non-Western music, does that count as a social justice issue?[110]

Should artistic representation be seen as a "social justice issue" and be included in discussions pertaining to recommender systems?

The hierarchic nature of MIR and its valuation chain[111] exacerbates these ethical and representational anxieties. Power structures between consumers, publishers and engineers are maintained and enforced in this value chain. Value chains in MIR prioritize engineers, programmers, and publishers[112] while keeping the end user at the fringes of the value chain.[113] Artists, regardless of musical traditions, have no place inside this value chain as in many cases publishers maintain control over the artists music. Ironically, this power structure is analogous to that identified in the post-colonial analyses of world music, where artists are used as "raw materials to be processed into commodities."[114]

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[110]Asher Tobin Chodos, "Solving and Dissolving Musical Affection: A Critical Study of Spotify and Automated Music Recommendation in the 21st Century" (dissertation, ProQuest, 2019), 73.

[111] The valuation chain is a concept that is presented by Holzapfel, Sturm, and Coeckelbergh to illustrate the links between consumers, developers, publishers, and end users. See: Andre Holzapfel, Bob L. Sturm, and Mark Coeckelbergh, "Ethical Dimensions of Music Information Retrieval Technology," Transactions of the International Society for Music Information Retrieval 1, no. 1 (2018): 46, https://doi.org/10.5334/tismir.13.

[112] Andre Holzapfel, Bob L. Sturm, and Mark Coeckelbergh, "Ethical Dimensions of Music Information Retrieval Technology," *Transactions of the International Society for Music Information Retrieval* 1, no. 1 (2018): 45-50, https://doi.org/10.5334/tismir.13.

[113] Ibid.

[114] This comment was made by Simon Firth when discussing non-western artists within western markets. See, "Introduction", *Western Music and its Others*, 30.
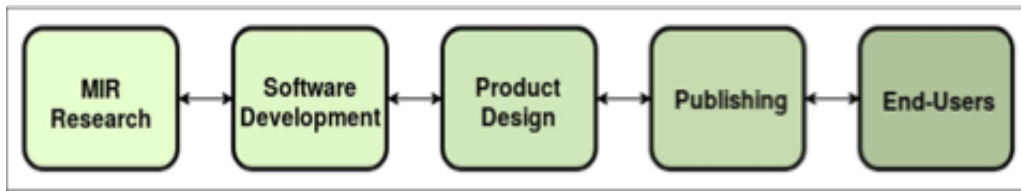
Fig. 10. Holzapfel's MIR valuation chain, in *Ethical Dimensions of Music Information Retrieval Technology* by Holzapfel et. al. p. 49.

Bias in MIR: from homogeneity to institutionalization

Intellectual property laws add another layer of complexity in the discussion of digital ethics and musical representation because proprietary claims inhibit algorithmic transparency.[115] This creates an opacity between the technology and end users as demonstrated by Spotify's "black box" method of protecting their IP.[116] Realistically, algorithms reflect the environments and social realities that are constructed around them, or as Hughes eloquently states, "a piece of software is not an isolated object, but a combination of human arrangement, technical artifacts, and social practices into a sociotechnical system."[117] In the instance of MIR, lack of diversity among engineers developing its algorithms and software has led to institutionalized biases shaping algorithms.

A handful of scholars have been openly vocal about the lack of diversity and the impact this has had on representation and the user experience.[118] Concern over diversity

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[115] Maria Eriksson et al., *Spotify Teardown: Inside the Black Box of Streaming Music*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2019) 6-10.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Hughes, T.P. (1994) as cited in Andre Holzapfel, Bob L. Sturm, and Mark Coeckelbergh, *Ethical Dimensions of Music Information Retrieval Technology*, 46.

[118] See Born (2020), Holzapfel et. al (2018), O'Dair & Fry (2021), and Bauer (2019).

and more humane approaches in MIR is reflected in publications such as Christine

Bauer's "Allowing for Equal Opportunities for [Artists] in Music Recommendation: A

position paper" and Holzapfel's "Ethical Dimensions of Music Information Retrieval."

Ethnomusicologist Georgina Born takes the discussion further by analyzing the field of

MIR through a critical framework.

MIR technologies tend to reproduce essentializing binaries such as "the West and

the rest" found in the world music market. Born critiques this binary by asking "whose

music and which music, among the vast ocean of sounds in the world, gets to be the focus

of MIR's influential scientific practices[?]"[119] Demographic and institutionalized biases

negatively impact popular non-western musics. From its inception, the field of MIR has

been dominated by "white, educated, industrialized, rich" engineers who "operate within

democracies" (WEIRD).[120] This homogeneity is reflected in the datasets that are used to

train these music recognition algorithms. Institutionalization also heavily favors

Eurogenetic forms of musical practices. Consequently, certain non-western musics are

underrepresented, creating cultural biases within datasets.[121] Computer engineer Steven J.

Downie states that the reason bias manifests itself within MIR stems from the challenges

that non-western musical practices present to MIR engineers.

> I believe the bias toward Western Common Practice (CP) music has three causes. First, there are many styles of music for which symbolic and audio encodings are not available, nonstandard, or incomplete. Improvised jazz, electronic art music, music of Asia, and performances of Indian ragas all are examples. Likewise, we do not yet have comprehensive recording sets of African tribal songs nor Inuit throat music. Acquiring, recording, transcribing, and encoding music are all time-consuming and expensive activities. For some music[s], whole new encoding

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[119] Born 2020, p. 195.
[120] Henrich et al., (2010) as found it Born (2020), 194.
[121] See Holzapfel, (2018) ,52 and Born (2020), 194.

schemes will also have to be developed. Thus, it is pragmatically more expedient to build systems based upon easier-to-obtain, easier-to-manipulate, CP music. Second, developers are more familiar with CP music than with other styles, and thus are working with that which they understand. Third, I believe that developers wish to maximize the size of their potential user base and therefore have focused their efforts on CP music because it arguably has the largest transcultural audience.[122]

Would any of the issues that Downie stated above exists if there was more diversity and inclusion in the field of MIR? Would the inclusion of artist feedback alleviate some of the issues of musical representation? These are the types of questions slowly emerging within the field of MIR. It is important to note that computer scientists from different parts of the world are starting to incorporate traditional and folk musics into MIR. Barış Bozkurt's publication "Usul and Makam driven automatic melodic segmentation for Turkish music" demonstrates that algorithmic analysis of non-western musical traditions is viable if developers are familiar with the parameters of the dataset, thus elucidating the importance of diversity within the field. Computer scientists from the Univarsitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona are working with CompMusic[123], a culture specific musical repository used for musical fingerprinting of non-western music. Developments in music information retrieval will continue to influence the representation of music and its distribution within digital domains. Like the world music market, music information retrieval algorithms will be subjected to scrutiny and the power structures

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[122] Stephen J. Downie. Music information retrieval (Chapter 7). In *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 37, ed. Blaise Cronin, 303-304.
[123] Xavier Serra. 2012. "A Multicultural Approach in Music Information Research." Paper presented at WWW '12 Companion: Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on World Wide Web, Miami, Florida, April 2012, 151-156. https://doi.org/10.1145/2187980.2188216.

that reify these algorithms will be questioned and challenged by both musicians and

scholars alike.

Social Tags and Collaborative filtering

        In addition to datasets used within MIR algorithms, social tags are used to provide

unique and nuanced data provided by platform users. These social tags are a valuable tool

since they provide semantic descriptors that can be used to classify and categorize music.

In democratized music platforms such as Bandcamp, these tags provide users with a way

to discover new music as well as giving artist greater visibility. For consumers, this

means greater access to markets and information on a globalized scale. For tech

companies, this means an ability to harness collective intelligence on users' likes and

preferences.[124]Social tagging, also referred to as "user generated keywords," and "tags,"

are a simple way to provide semantic descriptors to online information for the purposes

of categorization and indexing.[125] Social tagging is widely used in streaming services and

online distribution platforms, since it provides aesthetic and cultural data that cannot be

extrapolated (yet) by computer algorithms. Users of online platforms can tag music with

semantic descriptors to categorize and index music. Collections of tags can be used to

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[124] Tim O'Reilly, "What Is Web 2.0," New Titles, September 17, 2021,
https://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html.
[125] Jessica Trant, "Studying Social Tagging and Folksonomy: A Review and Framework," *Journal of Digital Information*, no. 1 (2009): 1-44.

index a personal library of music, creating a folksonomy.[126] Folksonomies inform the

creation of taxonomies, which are defined as a hierarchic structure of related tags.[127]
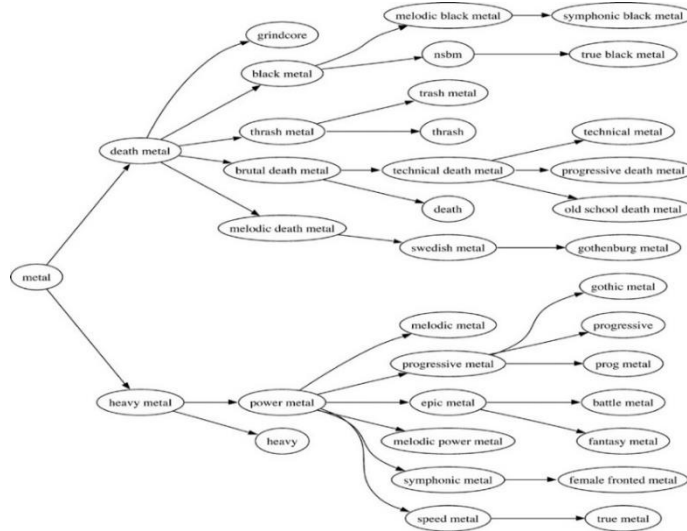

Fig. 11. Paul Lamere's folksonomy of metal music in "Social Tagging and Music
Information Retrieval," *Journal of New Music Research* (2008), p.13.

Websites and streaming services have various methods for applying social tags to

music. An example of such methods includes Tagging Rights, Tagging Support,

Aggregation, and Type of Object.[128] Tagging rights are a method of social tagging where

taggers are only allowed to tag items if they have previously contributed or are members

of the platforms in which they are tagging, as opposed to free-for-all tagging where

anyone can create a tag.[129]

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[126] Paul Lamere, "Social Tagging and Music Information Retrieval," *Journal of New Music Research* 37, no.
2 (2008): pp. 101-107, https://doi.org/10.1080/09298210802479284.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Lamere, *Social Tagging and Music Information Retrieval*, 101-107.
[129] Ibid.

Fig. 12. Example of the Last FM tagging rights system in action. Accessed October 20, 2021. Source: https://www.last.fm/user/musicology01/playlists/create/from-tag.

Tagging support is a system that suggests tags that have already been applied by the user.[130] Tagging support systems create a more stable system of tagging, one that is also more accurate to users' own familiar categories as it standardizes and recommends frequently used tags to its users.[131] The aggregation method is a popular method of social tagging as it allows you to tag the same item with similar tags multiple times.[132] Type of object tagging makes it possible to tag multiple objects instead of a single item. This is useful when associating record labels to recordings or locations to music. Bandcamp uses the methods of aggregate tagging and object tagging for its user interface.
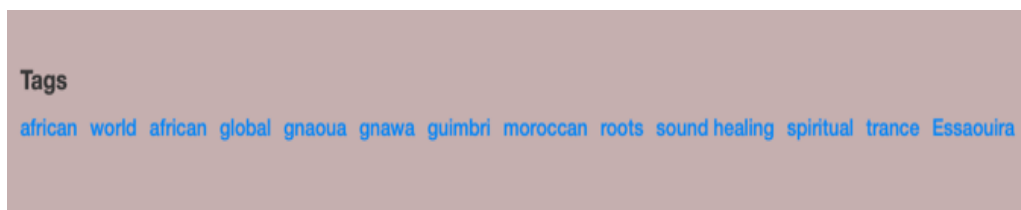

Fig. 13. Bandcamp's aggregate tags systems places emphasis on "location" as well as "genre." Accessed October 20, 2021. Source: https://bandcamp.com/tag/world?tab=all_releases

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[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

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Social tagging is helpful for identifying nuanced musical genres and associating non-musical descriptors to musical sounds. Although social tagging is an efficient way of identifying music, the limitations are obvious when presented with music that is unfamiliar to the user. What happens when a single semantic descriptor such as #worldmusic encapsulates various musical genres and traditions? What are the limitations of the tag #worldmusic?

CHAPTER 6

PROBLEMATIZING #WORLDMUSIC

In this chapter, I will be discussing the problematic nature of using social tags in the genre of world music. The problematic nature of world music has found its way within the digital confines of music streaming. The use of #worldmusic is problematic, as it does not accurately describe the rich multicultural traditions that are part of the world music genre, negatively impacting the practitioners of non-western popular music. This chapter will demonstrate the drawbacks of the #worldmusic tag by exemplifying issues of mis-categorization and asking the question: where does world music belong in the era of digital streaming?

Due to the complex nature of the world music genre, the tag #worldmusic is also problematic. World music is an all-encompassing umbrella term whose purpose was designed for the commodification of culture and was never meant to fairly represent the music or its practitioners. The genre of world music does not have a defining aesthetic or musical form due to the reductionist and essentialist nature of the genre, in which all popular non-western music is labeled as such. Electronic music from Africa differs greatly from Tuareg Rock, yet they are still categorized under the same genre. Lumping them all under the category of world music has the potential to eliminate differences of musical aesthetic, thus further advancing the misrepresentation of artists by minimizing their visibility outside of the #worldmusic tag.

The pejorative terms that are used to describe world music such as exotic and tribal do not describe musical qualities; rather, they describe perceptions from a culturally

imperialist point of view. The #worldmusic tag is therefore of limited use in MIR

recommender systems that aim to make recommendations based on identifiable musical

qualities and social descriptors. Music streaming services use human curation to mitigate

these problems.

In an ever-increasing world of artificial intelligence and algorithms, the gap

between human interactions and algorithms is only widening as the algorithms are slowly

taking over human decision making.[133] It is possible that human-curated playlists will be

replaced with more advanced machine learning algorithms. This begs the question: Is

there a place for "world music" in streaming?

Tags and the issues associated with #worldmusic

> …tags are just compasses; they don't define who you are or what you play; it just
> makes it easier for people to find you. I know that it is sometimes uncomfortable
> when you are trying to put yourself in the box and your music in the box.
> Musicians have their egos, and they feel that "My music is the whole world! I do
> the music of the world! I don't want to put myself in the box." But don't think
> about it; you aren't putting yourself in the box; it's just lighthouses, little light
> houses in the ocean of music making it easier for people to find you.[134]

Olja is a musician from St. Petersburg, Russia and is the lead instrumentalist and

composer for the band Dikajee. During our interview, Olja compared social tags to "little

light houses." The utilitarian function of social tags is simple: describe the music and

organize it. Social tagging goes beyond the function of simple semantic descriptors and

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[133] Dionysios Demetis, Alan S. Lee, and Dionysios Demetis, "When Humans Using the It Artifact Becomes It Using the Human Artifact," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 2018, pp. 929-952, https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00514.

[134] Olja Karpova of Dikajee, interview by author, Online, September 7, 2021.

folksonomies. Social tagging is part of the larger process of representation, as it informs

algorithms of sociocultural aesthetics, moods, and associations.[135]

Social tagging in the case of algorithmic representation of world music is not

accurate in the sense that it can associate artists with unrelated genres in which they

would not like to be identified. These inaccuracies often stem from reductionisms. Here

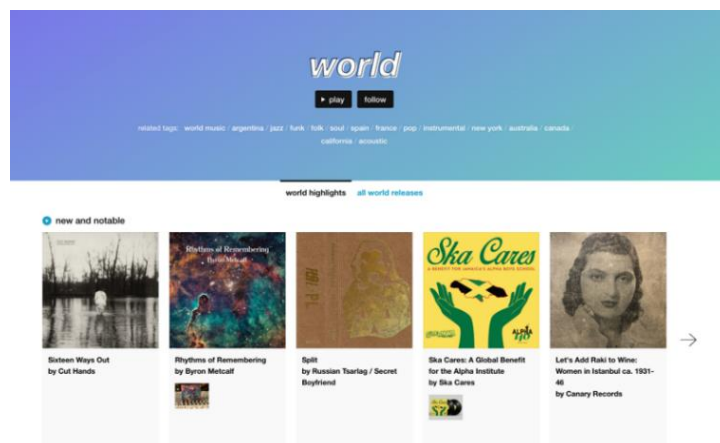is a following example of the negative impact #worldmusic has on artists.

Fig. 14. A screenshot of the world music section of Bandcamp. Accessed October
27, 2021. Source: https://bandcamp.com/tag/world?tab=all_releases

The example above was taken from the world music section of the Bandcamp

website. One of the bands in the example above is not accurately represented as they

identify as "contemporary American DIY" music, yet their music is found in the world

section of Bandcamp. The album "Split" is an album by Russian Tsarlag and Secret

Boyfriend. The following is a description of this album:

> Russian Tsarlag and Secret Boyfriend are two of the most distinct and inimitable
> makers in the canon of the contemporary American "DIY" underground. In 2013,
> the two artists released an untitled split 12" on Ryan Martin's (Secret Boyfriend)

prolific *Hot Releases* label. It's a pleasure to host their reunion as a part of the ENXPL series, sharing new work.[136]

The musical aesthetic of Russian Tsarlag resembles a "low-fi" and "chill wave" style of experimental music. Secret Boyfriend's music is aesthetically similar to Russian Tsarlag's. Both North American artists identify their music and genre as pop and electronic music and do not incorporate the elements stereotypically associated with world music such as "ethnic instruments" and "tribal sounds," yet they are in the world section. How does this happen? A quick analysis of the tags for the album "Split" might give more insight on how the album ended up in the world music page:
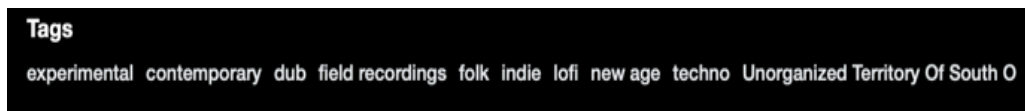

Fig. 15. Tags used for the album "Split." Accessed October 30, 2021. Source: https://enmossed.bandcamp.com/album/split

Tags such as "field recording," "folk," and "Unorganized Territory of South O," may be contextualized by Natural Language Processing (NLP) algorithms as descriptors for the genre of world music. It is possible that the strong association of field recordings with ethnomusicology can cause an algorithm to determine the genre as world music. Mentions of "territories" may also have a similar effect due to the centrality of geographic origins to the genre. The band name itself, "Russian Tsarlag," can also be racialized in ways that music tagged as world music may be racialized. Marcello, one of the musicians I interviewed, had the same issue of mis-categorization on Bandcamp. His

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[136] "Split," by Russian Tsarlag / Secret Boyfriend, enmossed, accessed October 25, 2021, https://enmossed.bandcamp.com/album/split.

music can be described as "chill-wave" and "80's pop music." When I informed Marcello

that he was in the world section he responded with the following:

> No, I'm not sure why that's even there. For some reason it was recommended to
> me although, I don't consider my music world music. To me world music has a
> different aesthetic to what I play. I think world consists more of traditional sounds
> and ethnic instruments, not to sound like I'm generalizing it, but that's typically
> what you would hear.[137]

Could Marcello's music have been categorized differently and more accurately? I

postulate that algorithms are the reason behind the mis-categorization of Marcello's

music. His music is sung in Spanish; thus, it is possible for the algorithm to interpret his

music as world music. This is because of the dominant association of the English

language with popular forms of music. Maybe Marcello's cover album *Latin Stage*

C:/Cheaptunes Vol.3 causes the algorithm to lump his music with Latin music, which is

often exoticized. Unfortunately, the reason for this mis-categorization will remain

unknown due to the mysterious nature of the algorithm quietly running in the

background.

World music and streaming: Where do *we* belong?

During my artist interviews, I asked the interviewees if they felt like they had a

place in the world of streaming. Their response was mixed; some were optimistic about

it, while others felt skeptical about the streaming industry. Jordan, from Lone Piñon, the

New Mexican traditional band told me:

> I think that on a communal level, [musical] connections are still prevalent in the
> way people experience music, but that's such a small part of the way people
> experience music now, especially since the pandemic, since that whole side just

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[137] Marcello Cataldo, interview by author, Online, September 4, 2021.

disappeared, and it's barely coming back. The pandemic has thrown us into that kind of algorithm world and it's hard to really see that we have any place in there. I don't see a place in that for us, not much for us or for 99% of traditional artists."[138]

Jordan brings up several points of interest when discussing streaming and the representation of the non-western, folk and world music traditions. Traditional, folk, and world music are arguably underrepresented in streaming services that recommend the most popular music most frequently. An online article published by Mario J. Lucero published in Quartz in 2020 titled *Music streaming services mishandle our data—and our culture is paying for it*, discusses the issues of cultural representation in an ever-growing digitized environment. The issue of the digitization of music is *whose* music is recommended and placed within the queue. It remains an issue of access as "streaming companies generally do not have an established presence within the communities that produce subgenre musical genres, the people who create the algorithms and define music categories often don't even see what they are missing."[139] Of course the subgenres that are referred to in this article consist of non-popular and non-western musics. Interactions like these create a new type of technological mediation in which streaming services have assumed the role of record label, intermediary, and personal DJ.

In the industry of music streaming, data collection is a critical component for music recommendation. Asymmetries in data can lead to a limited representation in music recommendation systems, further marginalizing non-western pop and other non-

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[138] Interview with Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon.

[139] Mario J. Lucero, "Music Streaming Services Mishandle Our Data-and Our Culture Is Paying for It," Quartz (Quartz, January 3, 2020), https://qz.com/1773480/the-problem-with-how-the-music-streaming-industry-handles-data/.

western commercial music and its subgenres. The issue of underrepresentation of music in streaming platforms might seem like a minimal and superficial problem, but the sociocultural implications impact artists on economic and social dimensions.[140] Lucero attempts to elucidate the asymmetries of data collection to multiple curators, but their response was apathetic.

> In an attempt to better understand and hopefully highlight ways to help correct this data collection problem, I spoke with editors and curators at Apple Music, Billboard, Spotify, TiVo, and various other music cataloging and streaming services. Some of them were aware of the issue, but much of the responses tended toward a mix of apathy and derision.[141]

Lucero's inquiries on the inequalities of streaming were brushed off and dismissed by the large technocratic powers that inform the market. Their reaction reflects the previous observations made on the problematic nature of MIR. Again, the dismissive tendencies come from positions of hierarchy, as this inequality is not affecting commercially popular western music or its super stars. To reduce the issues of representation and the criticism of platform users, streaming services sometimes promote cultural diversity through playlists celebrating diversity, but in the process, they often tokenize a few well-known artists of a particular genre. In my interview with Jordan, he also points this out:

> Another thing that goes back to the question of authenticity [in digital domains], I feel like that in that digital and algorithmic world it really favors it being one of everything, just one. One really good example of everything and you don't need two because whichever one is best is what can fill that niche.[142]

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140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Jordan Wax of Lone Piñon, interview by author, Online, September 7, 2021.

The "One of everything" is a prevalent model of representation in music streaming platforms. The example below was taken from Spotify's "Hispanic heritage month" playlist, which is a compilation of "Latinx" artists representing "Hispanic" culture. This playlist was licensed by Universal Music Group to Spotify.

Fig. 16. Screen shot of Spotify's Hispanic heritage month playlist. Source: Spotify, Accessed October 20, 2021.

The playlists title translates to "Inclusion is Universal", yet the artists in the playlist consist of North American Latin pop superstars such as Karol G, J Balvin, Luis Fonsi, and Selena. How representative are these artists of the diversity of people who claim "Latinx" or Hispanic heritage? This example also shows how record labels maintain the ability to become cultural gatekeepers within the digitized world. The ability to manipulate algorithms to favor a specific genre of music and the opaqueness of the implementation of algorithms in recommender systems furthers the chasm between artists and streaming platforms.[143]

Problematizing the world music tag demonstrates the need for a more equitable and egalitarian model of musical representation in the 21st century. The socio-cultural

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[143] Vox Creative, "Man-Made Machine Music," The Verge (Vox Creative Next, September 23, 2019), https://www.theverge.com/ad/20880077/fairness-for-musicians-artists-music-streaming-algorithms.

ramifications of dismissing or minimizing this issue have a great impact not just on artists, but also on listeners who have and affective investment in the artist's music. It is important for all contemporary artists to ask the question *"where does my music belong in the age of streaming?"* This question can stoke important debates that can shape the practices of music distribution and representation. Although this thesis presents a limited scope of data within the realms of MIR and social tagging, my ethnographic data from (artists' comments) and my brief analysis of hashtags within Bandcamp illustrate the need for interdisciplinary approaches to MIR.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Streaming platforms have significantly altered the musical landscape over the past

two decades. Both artists and industry have adapted to the new digital ecosystems.

Accessibility of recording technology and the facility of mass distribution have created a

more democratized and globalized market in which independent artists coexist with

major and independent record labels. In the world music market, changes that were

brought about by the web 2.0 have greatly influenced how artists are represented both

musically and commercially. Although the internet is often seen as a disruptor to the old

power structures of the music industry, the old forms of world music marketing have

been reinscribed into a new context. This neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism are

cemented by old stereotypes and narratives of authenticity in world music which have

permeated into the digital identities of artists and their music. Artists can now negotiate

how they are represented online due to the democratization of music in the online world

as they are able to negotiate authenticities between themselves, their audiences, and

labels. These authenticities can be communicated in terms of the real as opposed to the

artificial, the local as opposed to the global, the artistic as opposed to the commercial, and

the pure as opposed to the hybrid. These perceptions of authenticity remain relevant in

the genre of world music, as the genre relies on notions of authenticity for its

commodification.

My digital survey of Bandcamp provides an insight on how artists construct,

deconstruct, imagine, appropriate and re-appropriate authenticity within the constructs of

the world music genre. Bandcamp demonstrates how the democratization of musical practices is shaping the way artists represent themselves online. The old schemas of world music are not as prevalent as they once were, but the remnants can still be found within new technologies. Gaining the artist's perspective also shows that the genre of world music is evolving due to the more democratized environment. This evolution is multifaceted and involves many participants such as streaming platforms, artists, and labels. New forms of power structures have emerged due to the involvement of tech companies in musical distribution. Streaming services occupy the space of the cultural intermediary.

Dependence on algorithms for musical distribution has also shaped the way artists are represented in digital environments. For non-western popular music artists, this representation creates possibilities of misrepresentation and marginalization due to the reductionist and essentialist nature of world music, as described in this thesis. If the genre of world music is problematic, its hashtag, #worldmusic, is no different due to the homogenization of rich multicultural musical practices into a single genre. Social tagging has also created avenues for old stereotypes and narratives of authenticity to re-emerge.

A dialogue must be maintained between artists, ethnomusicologists, musicologists, computer engineers, industry executives, and tech companies to find interdisciplinary solutions to the problem of providing a more socially equitable digital representation of non-western pop music and even the less popular western genres. This equity will reduce the narratives of dominance, submission, and neo-imperialism. I believe that a new framework needs to be established to study the impact digital

streaming has on the genre of world music. This new framework, which I refer to as World Music 3.0, encompasses how algorithms, tech companies, and the democratization of musical practices interact within a globalized community. World music 1.0 involved the commercializing of non-western sounds while marketing exoticist tropes and notions of authenticity. With the introduction of the internet, world music 2.0 integrated the web into the framework of musical distribution, further globalizing the genre. World music 2.0 afforded independent record labels to re-release recordings of self-conscious musical hybrids from music centers beyond the metropoles. Artists also have a greater ability to challenge the power structures that were previously established. World music 3.0 is a new paradigm describing the internet not as a tool for musical distribution and production, but rather, a digital space in which artists, labels, and audiences interact either socially or commercially. World music 3.0 analyzes the algorithmic impact of the artistic process and the digital representation of artists, as algorithms are becoming pervasive in all facets of marketing and distribution. This new framework requires an ethnomusicological approach to technoculture, one that will study how the interaction of these systems impact the socio-cultural practice of music and its practitioners. It is crucial that the field of ethnomusicology maintain a greater interest in these digital environments as they provide valuable socio-cultural knowledge that is needed to contextualize musical traditions in digital domains.

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