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In what ways might it be said that contemporary genres of indigenous music and dance are a result of globalisation? What issues does this raise for indigenous performers?

“You have made your home
In the streets of life
You’ll take whatever...will come...
Then put on your shoes of blue
And you immediately dance
Dance of life...
So follow this song.
Malaysian rock group, Kembara 1984.

The question above queries if the western influence, of centrally – oriented high art, has drastically affected the authenticity of indigenous music and the performers sense of identity. Sarah Rubidge, questions authenticity, what does it count for, “artistic value, historical value or both”?

From personally experiencing a “drum circle”, I can understand that the music is a great way of expressing yourself. Indigenous performers present their identity within their music. They value the right to play, sing or dance.

In the new era of globalisation by digestion, the music industry is at the fore. Global corporations have emerged to create and exploit global music markets. It could be said that globalisation is affecting everyone’s lives taking away individuality. Richard Letts is a member of the Music Council of Australia. Music itself most definitely predates the music industry; however the industry is very powerful. Letts believes that even though technological changes are now flooding the industry impact upon corporate structures and profits and how we get access to music, the human need for musical nourishment will survive and somehow be satisfied. An example of a contemporary musical genre used to appeal to an international audience is Paul Simon’s *Graceland*. Kwela was a black urban genre in the 1950s and 1960s. Originally played by urban youths as “improvisational street music”¹. The music itself was played on pennywhistles and guitars, (it is even suggested by David Coplan that the pennywhistle built the foundations of South African jazz). The pennywhistle features predominantly in *Graceland* bringing with it a complex of meanings configured around early South African jazz. This genre of music being one of the most prominent expressive forms in black townships during one of the most repressive decades. The pennywhistle can be found on the track “You Can Call Me Al”. However the pennywhistle may not be as “authentic” as one might think, it has been “cleaned up”. Apart from the whistle actually sounding different and less “windy”, it is played by a white South African, when it was originated by black street youths. This is just one example of how a meaningful sound has been changed by a

¹ Paul Simon’s *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning – Louise Meintjes

western industry to suit what they perceive as sounding good. *Graceland* could be said as holding a collage of different sounds. All with different meanings, as well as Paul Simon's individual style. Although some of the meaning and the original authenticity has been taken out of the music, "*Graceland* has altered South Africans to the richness and currency of black South African expression". Opening up opportunities on the local market for blacks, since most of the music industry within South Africa is dominated by whites.

Robert G. Smith has been a music educator for forty years. He has taken a particular interest within Maori music due to his New Zealand heritage, "I spent almost five years as the national music advisor in the Fiji Islands. Subsequently my music education career has been a short love affair with indigenous music's, in the Pacific, North and Central America, east Africa, back again to New Zealand and across the past two decades, apart from a recent sojourn as International Music Consultant in Sri Lanka, here in the Northern Territory of Australia". Smith believes that we need to realise the impact of cultural beliefs as they affect music creation performance and the contexts for music. A very practical definition of culture suggests that music like most other cultural artefacts, informs us 'how things are done around here'. Smith also explains what an important part of Aboriginal society and life music is. An Aboriginal child's education is centered around music. Smith understands that one can't just go and tell these people to change the way they are doing things because it may be thought by some that the Western way is the best way. The music of the Aborigines is a complexed structure full of ritual and important meaning it would be an offence to go and tell them what they are playing is not music because it is. "We should all be thoroughly convinced of the validity of our own definitions of 'music' and of the roles we believe music plays in education if we are to teach music effectively"².

In Tony Mitchell's article, "World Music and the Popular Music Industry: An Australian View", he brings to light the views of musicologist Alan Lomax, "the cultural imperialism hypothesis", an assumption that the predominantly one-way flow of cultural products 'from West to the Rest' threatens to produce a cultural 'grey out'. In the case of popular music the hypothesis projects a sort of Michael Jackson world takeover of musical expectation and expression"³. Lomax talks of 'authentic change' which promotes social change and is resistant to the prevalent economic internationalism of popular music. The globalisation of the local musicians could almost be seen as 'cultural imperialism'. The Western Music industry could not possibly understand the meanings behind some of the indigenous music that they wish to use and produce world wide for the global market. The indigenous people are often making political statements through their music or celebrating rights of passage. The indigenous people celebrate musical purity and the authenticity of their own style. The mixture of the styles encouraged by the Western music industry has been described as "contamination by Western technological and musical influences" (Tony Mitchell). However some view this differently such as Paul Willis and Dick Hebdige. They have expanded into more multi ethnic "sites of difference" which call for a combination of micro analysis of local practices and pan-global macro –analyses. Such analyses "consider the Other in the context of the world political economy".

² An alien context? Teaching music in indigenous Australian settings – Robert G. Smith

³ World Music and the Popular Music Industry: An Australian View – Tony Mitchell and *Music on the Margins* by Alan Lomax

Even though it can obviously be seen that issues of identity are under pressure due to globalisation, some of the music producers from the West have understood this. In December 1991 during an interview Mandawuy Yunuping stated his wish to work alongside World Music producers and musicians Brian Eno and Peter Gabriel, he said that they respected the issue of not losing the magic that the Aborigines already had within the music. Not all music producers respect this changing the meaning, rhythm and the language of the music.

A positive aspect of World Music is what it states as its main objective is allowing other people from all over the world to experience different types of music. However the question remains are the music producers learning to respect authenticity, purity of music and the importance it has within the indigenous people's way of life. We might note that recording companies and media organisations are known more for their exploitation of artists than their defence of artist's interests. Through their short sighted arrogance and greed the major label media conglomerates are sowing the seeds for their own destruction.

Bibliography

The Music Council of Australia, Internet Website.

"An alien context? Teaching music in indigenous Australian settings" Robert G. Smith

"The Music Industry: Globalised and Spinning" Richard Letts

"World Music and the Popular Music Industry: An Australian View" Tony Mitchell

"Music and Margins" Lomax

"Paul Simon's Graceland, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning"
Louise Meintjes

"Does Authenticity Matter" Sarah Rubidge