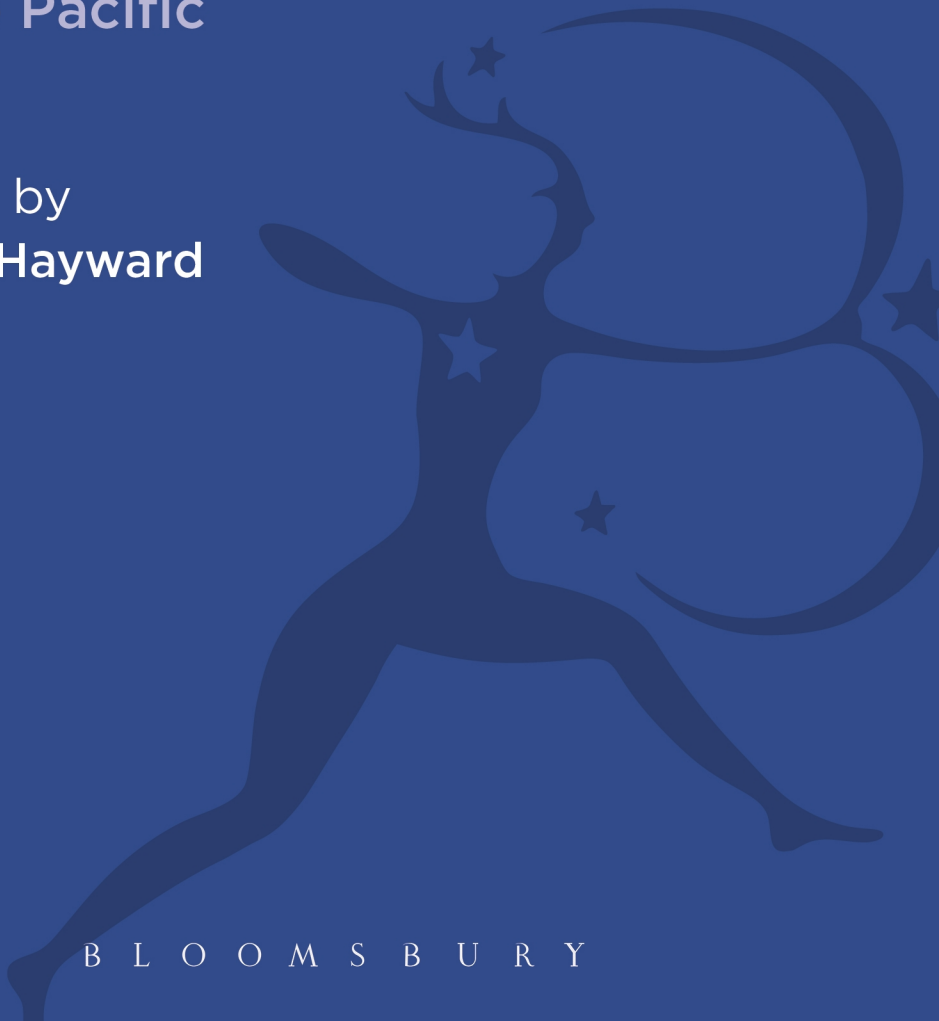


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Indigenous Peoples, Cultural
Politics, and Popular Music
in the Pacific

Edited by
Philip Hayward



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Sound Alliances

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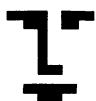
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Sound Alliances

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, CULTURAL POLITICS
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Every effort has been made to contact all the copyright holders of material included in the book. If any material has been included without permission, we offer our apologies to all concerned and will happily include acknowledgement in any future edition.

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Introduction: Beyond the Axis

Philip Hayward

Over the last fifteen years Popular Music Studies has become an established field within (anglophone) Western academia. It now has an international umbrella body, IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music), which holds major biennial conferences; has a series of national ASPMs which hold their own conferences and arrange events; and is affiliated to a series of institutions, principally in the form of university departments offering courses and/or research programmes in the subject. This groundswell of activity has also resulted in the publication of an increasing number of scholarly books and the production of several journals, such as the UK-based *Popular Music*, which began publishing in 1981; the US-based *OneTwoThreeFour: A Rock 'n' Roll Quarterly* (published in the first half of the 1980s); the sporadically published journal of IASPM USA, *Tracking* – relaunched in 1993 as *The Journal of Popular Music Studies*; and *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, which commenced in 1992.¹

But while Popular Music Studies may have become established as a discipline, it shares a central characteristic with its parallel, and partially parental, disciplines, notably Media Studies and Cultural Studies, in that it primarily represents the aggregation of various approaches to the field of popular music (rather than a discrete and coherent discipline in its own right).² With notable exceptions, most obviously the work of Wallis and Malm,³ Popular Music Studies has primarily applied itself to what might be termed a North Atlantic axis – seeing the music cultures of the USA and United Kingdom (and, to a lesser extent, those of Canada and western Europe) as constituting its essential culture and focus. In this regard, it has underexplored regions outside its original context, most notably those of Asia and the southern continents. These have remained, by and large, the province of Western ethnomusicologists. Yet here, too, there have been significant oversights. While the traditional and/or classical musical forms of non-Western cultures have been subject to various degrees of scrutiny over the last 30–40 years, the majority of new forms of popular musics which have resulted from cultural contacts, specifically, transactions

between Western and non-Western cultures, have only recently begun to receive attention.

These forms are often referred to by ethnomusicologists as *syncretic*. The term itself derives from the medieval notion of syncretism, of 'the attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tendencies or practices',⁴ and was a notion that, in its earliest usage, referred to the attempted reconciliation of distinct religious and/or philosophical concepts. The derivation of the term emphasizes ethnomusicologists' perceptions of the 'deep-rootedness' of forms of traditional music in their communities; and ethnomusicologists' perceptions of their complex natures and the difficulty in hybridizing them with imported forms.

Study of syncretic musics became more prominent in the 1980s, largely due to the rise of the 'world music' phenomenon (i.e. the Western marketing of musical products produced by musicians from non-Western locations) and, more specifically, a series of individual collaborations between Western and non-Western musicians. One of the most influential early studies of these collaborations was Steven Feld's article, 'Notes on World Beat', published in *Public Culture Bulletin* in 1988. In this piece Feld discussed the significance of the (then) novel phenomenon of Western recording artists producing albums which drew substantially on African and various non-Western musical traditions and resources.⁵ Paul Simon's *Graceland* (1986) is the paradigmatic example of this. (NB. Feld identifies this specific kind of musical collaboration as 'world beat', to distinguish it from the variety of global musics yoked together under the generic marketing term 'world music'.)

Articles such as Feld's, and the continuing production and popularity of a series of albums subsequent to *Graceland*, resulted in discussions of world beat and world music coming to the fore in both Popular Music Studies and (in one wing of) Ethnomusicology. In the case of the former, this did not so much represent a globalization of address but rather the reinscription of the North Atlantic axis as a point of cultural mediation: the context for the creation of world beat and for the identification of diverse cultural commodities capable of being (re-)presented as world music. In this model, the North Atlantic axis became both a curator and a facilities house for world music/world beat production and the originator of an (essentially domestic) discourse about such production.⁶

In all this, certain parts of the globe seemed more part of the 'world' projected by these (musical) definitions than others. Much remained *terra incognita*, areas out-of-focus, more characterized by scholarly indifference than perceptions of cultural in-difference. One such area was that of the Australia–Western/Central Pacific region. This is an area easily characterized by the *inbetweenness* of its major anglophone settler nations, Australia and New Zealand (so remote from their notional 'mother' axis); the pre-mediated and touristified music culture of Hawai'i; the discrete obscurity of a scattering of small island cultures; and the

complexities of Papua New Guinea (with its 800 languages). *World Music: The Rough Guide* (Broughton, S. et al., 1995), for example, a 697-page book which contains detailed and largely accurate and uncontentious accounts of a range of global musics, relegates Papuan and Pacific musics to a final seven-page section (690–7). Aside from its brevity, the section is poorly researched – to the point of absurdity – and appears to be based solely on research undertaken by the British composer David Fanshawe during a couple of brief visits to the region. Given that writing tasks for other regions were assigned to local writers, it is baffling why the job of writing this section was not given to a (Papua) New Guinean, Hawaiian, New Zealander or Islander writer.

Perceptions about the marginality of Australia–Western/Central Pacific concerns to the project of Euro-American Popular Music Studies were graphically reinforced in 1993, with the relaunch of the IASPM US journal, *Tracking*, as *The Journal of Popular Music Studies*. Timed to coincide with the first international conference of IASPM to be held in the US, the first issue of the retitled journal featured a significant cover design. This attempted to represent IASPM’s international address by depicting the world as two spheres, overlapping around the mid-Atlantic. The left sphere showed North and South America, the right Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Filleted out from this global representation was the slice of the planet comprising the islands of the North and South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and East and South-East Asia.

Perfect Beat was founded in 1992 by a group of Australian-based academics, specifically to address this kind of marginalization and to develop regional music studies. As the publication’s subtitle, ‘The Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture’, indicated, its focus was the broad multidisciplinary tradition of Popular Music Studies (described above). From its inception, the journal addressed itself to contemporary music and its broader cultural and media contexts. Early issues featured articles on a range of topics, from improvisatory musics in pre-jazz Australia (Whiteoak, 1993) and the use of the didjeridu in recorded music (Neuenfeldt, 1993), through to the promotional function of music videos (Battersby and Valtwies, 1992) and the music policy of Australian public radio (McManus, 1992). By the fourth issue it became increasingly evident to the editorial board that a series of common concerns linked the music cultures of Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Hawai’i and the other islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. From volume two, issue one, the journal formally announced its expanded, pan-Pacific focus by describing itself as ‘The *Pacific Journal*. . .’ in its subtitle. Since then, *Perfect Beat* has published articles on aspects of the music cultures of Australia, Hawai’i, New Caledonia, New Guinea and New Zealand, Yap and the international diffusion of regional musics such as Hawaiian and Ambonese/Eurasian pop.⁷ In recognition of the enhanced internationalization of music – as well as of the music

industry, fandom and simple *communication* – it has also addressed itself to the growing diffusion of communities of (previously) localized taste within broader contexts (Neuenfeldt, 1997; Mitchell, 1997; Stahl, 1997). What is notable about these studies is their emphasis on how the local/regional is not simply *dissolved* by the Internet, but *reconstituted*.

Over five years and ten issues (1(1)–3(2)), *Perfect Beat* has published an extensive and varied body of research and has encouraged authors who have subsequently published books on regional music issues.⁸ Despite this resource, the majority of English-language popular music texts that continue to be written (outside the Australia–Western/Central Pacific) generalize about a variety of forms of popular music, music radio, music video, etc., with almost total recourse to North Atlantic examples. They thereby comprise a highly selective – and consequently flawed – scholarly tradition. Indeed, so pervasive is this tendency, so many are its examples, that almost any book on popular music by a North Atlantic-based Popular Music Studies author – with notable exceptions such as Garofalo (1992), Lipsitz (1994) and the work of Wallis and Malm⁹ – will stand as an example.

This anthology brings together a selection of material from *Perfect Beat* addressing aspects of the relationship between indigenous peoples and popular music. Fifteen years ago, Margaret Kartomi published an article in the journal *Ethnomusicology* specifically addressed to Western scholars' perceptions of syncretic musics. In her article she emphasized that 'Western writers have tended to disapprove of [such] musics ... ignoring them or dismissing them as objects unworthy of attention' (1981: 227). As she also emphasized, this was based on a particular (educated and class-based) inflection of 'Eurocentric prejudices'. Surveying a range of ethnomusicological (and musicological) material written from the 1950s to the 1970s (as detailed in her bibliography (*ibid.*: 245–9)), she argued that although

blatantly discriminatory statements about these [i.e. syncretic] musical genres are made less frequently today than a few decades ago ... With a few exceptions, musicologists have hardly given themselves the opportunity to begin to understand the forces at work in culture contact situations (*ibid.*: 228–9).

As part of a detailed examination and critique of the uses and connotations of the term 'acculturation' (and its suitability as a description of cross-cultural musical styles and processes), Kartomi made a strongly argued point about notions of musical 'purity', namely that

there is a strong likelihood that all musics are syntheses of more than one cultural and (in some cases) class influence ... intercultural musical synthesis is not the exception but the rule. Conflict and change are part of the nature of reality, even in seemingly timeless, static societies (*ibid.*: 230).

Sound Alliances addresses issues of 'intercultural musical synthesis' and issues of 'conflict and change' not only in music cultures but also in the social groups and circumstances which originate them. As a result, the studies of indigenous people(s) and their engagements with popular music included here are orientated towards politics, the media and mediation, and music industry issues, in addition to the music itself.

The book is divided into three parts: I – Music, Identity and Cultural Politics; II – Music, Commerce and the Media Industries; and III – Access to the Mainstream: The Case of Yothu Yindi.

As with any anthology of its kind, the separation of chapters into discrete sections is somewhat problematic, since the themes of each interact and interrelate with each other. Part I comprises a series of broad historical analyses of the development of Australian Aboriginal Rock (Chapter 1), Maori and Pacific Islander music in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Chapter 2), and Kaneka music in New Caledonia (Chapter 3); along with more specific studies of the Koori (Aboriginal) music scene in Melbourne (Chapter 4) and contemporary Hawaiian musics (Chapters 5 and 6). Part II complements these by examining the way various industrial and media aspects interact with and/or facilitate contemporary syncretic musics. Individual chapters address the relationship between radio broadcasting and music culture (Chapter 9, on Maori radio), the development of locally-orientated music video production (Chapter 10, on the case of Papua New Guinea in the 1990s), the nature of particular music industry initiatives (Chapter 11, on New Zealand music in the mid-1990s), and the significance of (the absence of) copyright legislation for music cultures (Chapter 8, with reference to Papua New Guinea). Chapter 7 provides a broad overview of how a variety of industrial factors have affected the development of contemporary (Papua) New Guinean pop.

The final part comprises a case study of the Aboriginal rock group Yothu Yindi, who first rose to prominence in Australia in 1991 and then went on to attract international acclaim through tours of North and South America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Oceania in the mid-1990s. The section begins with a discussion of the significance of the band's roots in the Yolngu community of Yirrkala, Northern Territory and the high profile of that community in Aboriginal rights issues over the last two decades (Chapter 12). Chapters 13 and 14 then provide contrasting readings of the political significance of the band's best-known single and music video 'Treaty' (1991) and the broader issue of the political position, function and effect of Aboriginal music in a national and international context. The concluding chapter engages with these debates in a discussion of the band's career and its increasing multimedia orientation, including the presence of traditional Aboriginal culture on the Internet.

Neither this introduction, nor any of the individual chapters, attempts to draw on the research offered here to make overarching hypotheses about the complex interaction of Western, (post)colonial cultures and

indigenous peoples across the Australia-Western/Central Pacific region. Rather, the anthology attempts to provide fragments of a holistic perception of the issues involved in late twentieth-century regional popular music culture – a series of studies from a research project currently still in an early phase, one of mapping diversity and documenting and/or reconstructing a largely unrecorded history. In this manner, *Sound Alliances* offers itself as a resource. By making a specific selection of material from the first ten issues of *Perfect Beat* available to North American and European readers, through bookshop distribution, the anthology attempts to identify and foreground a range of specific issues as both of intrinsic interest and as examples. It offers a series of case studies with which North Atlantic-orientated scholarship can engage, or, at the very least, *include* in its own generalizing hypotheses. This in turn should identify the last five years of the journal – and its continuing publications – as a further resource and a signpost to the rich musical cultures of a region which deserve to be both firmly on the map of Popular Music Studies and on the CD and record players and radios of global culture.

Notes

1. *Perfect Beat – The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture* is a biannual publication, published in January and July, which commenced in July 1992. Further information about the journal can be obtained from: The Editor, c/o Department of Media and Music Studies, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia (Tel: +61 (0) 2 9850 8786; fax +61 (0) 2 9850 8240; e-mail <phayward@ocs1.ocs.mq.edu.au>; or by visiting the journal's Web site <<http://www.mcs.mq.edu.au/pbeat>>). Subscription information can be obtained from John Libbey and Co., Level 10, 15–17 Young Street, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia (Telephone +61 (0) 2 9251 4099; fax +61 (0) 2 9251 4428; e-mail <jlsydney@mpx.com.au>).
Perfect Beat has published two previous books: Hayward, P., Mitchell, T. and Shuker, R. (eds) (1994) *North Meets South: Popular Music in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (contact <mevans@pip.engl.mq.edu.au> for purchase information), and Neuenfeldt, K. (ed.) *The Didjeridu: From Arnhem Land to Internet* (1997), co-published with John Libbey Pty (Sydney) (contact <jlsydney@mpx.com.au> for purchase information).
2. This is as much to do with the strategic and opportunistic nature of the establishment of the discipline in various 'cramped' or interstitial spaces as it is with any conscious decision to opt for pluralistic interdisciplinarity. Indeed, it might prove highly productive, if contentious, for Popular Music scholars to hypothesize an ideal and coherent Popular Music Studies discipline and then try and work towards this from their various locations and positions.
3. Two authors who have developed their work in Scandinavia, at the fringes of the (anglophone) North Atlantic axis.

4. *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1975: 2223).
5. Though it should be noted that this tendency dates back to the late 1960s, at least, with Brian Jones and his attempts to record with various Moroccan performers and the more collaborative recordings undertaken by Ginger Baker and Mick Fleetwood in the 1970s and early 1980s.
6. As is well known, the term 'world music' itself was invented by a group of small record label owners in 1987, who were trying to find more effective ways of marketing and, particularly, retail shelving, the non-Western music they were releasing.
7. Along with broader studies of topics such as the nature of hip hop as a form of contemporary avant-garde (Wark, 1992); the significance of the theoretical work of Deleuze and Guattari for popular music analysis (Murphie, 1996); and a series of feature reviews of international books on contemporary music topics.
8. Such as Mitchell (1996), Shuker (1996), Hayward (1998), Neuenfeldt (1997) and Whiteoak (1997).
9. See Bibliography under both Wallis and Malm *and* Malm.

PART I

Music, Identity and Cultural Politics