

## A View from the South: Spanish Caribbean Perspectives on World Beat

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In spite of the fearful warnings by nationalists opposed to the internationalization of markets, a new world economic order already seems to be upon us. National boundaries are becoming increasingly irrelevant as commodities of all sorts—including music—are being produced and consumed in multiple international contexts rather than one culturally-specific location. One of the most prominent musical indicators of these new conditions is the phenomenon known as "world beat" in the United States, and "world music" in Europe, which is both a reflection and an agent of processes of musical and cultural interaction between widely disparate regions of the world. World beat is not a musical genre, but rather a marketing term describing the products of musical cross-fertilization between north—the U.S. and Western Europe, and south—primarily Africa and the Caribbean Basin, which began appearing on the popular music landscape in the early 1980s.

Ethnomusicologists have been faced with the challenge of developing new theoretical frameworks in which to situate and interpret these transnational and transcultural patterns of musical production and consumption. The appearance of Third World pop musics and musicians in First World contexts—and vice versa—has quite predictably stimulated conceptually as well as ethically challenging debates concerning the na-

ture and implications of world beat. Underlying these discussions has been a legitimate concern about the potentially disastrous consequences of homogenization and Westernization upon folk cultures being swept up in and transformed by what Appadurai has called "global culture flows" (1990). For example, Wallis and Malm's pioneering "Big Sounds From Small Peoples" (1984) noted the disproportionate influence of the West upon local musical cultures. Later, in the wake of Paul Simon's controversial 1986 Graceland project, Feld (1988) and Hamm (1989) questioned the ethics underlying the unequal relationship between Simon and his South African musical collaborators. On the other hand, these and other commentaries also recognized that there was a complex tension between the powerful forces of cultural and economic hegemony, and resistance to that hegemony through local control and appropriation of musical production and meaning.<sup>1</sup>

These useful efforts to describe and analyze a still-inchoate cultural and economic phenomenon, however, have often glossed over some of its subtle internal dynamics in which locally-defined issues of national, regional and racial identity also play a part. In this essay I will address two such issues specific to the Caribbean region that have not yet been raised in these debates. First, the discussions to date have not yet considered why some national or regional musics seem to be differentially represented in the world beat marketplace. I raise this question because, as I will argue below, the visibility of music from the Spanish Caribbean in world beat has been surprisingly low compared to that of other regions.<sup>2</sup> Second, by focusing on the impact of unequal power relationships between north and south, it has been improperly assumed that world beat's cultural interactions have been primarily bilateral—between north and south—thereby underplaying the increasingly multi-lateral interactions among different regions of the Third World itself.

### 1. The International Music Industry and the Emergence of World Beat

I want to preface my main points with some brief observations on the historical development of world beat, since it has not been well described in the analyses cited above.<sup>3</sup> This discussion will also make clear that what is unique about world beat is not the fact of musical exchange itself—which has been taking place between northern colonial metropolises and their former African and Caribbean colonies for decades—but

rather the emergence—practically simultaneously around 1982—of a new, interlocking commercial infrastructure established specifically to cultivate and nurture the appetites of First World listeners for exotic new sounds from the Third World. Of necessity I will focus more on the U.S. than on Europe, not because Europe is any less important to the world beat landscape, but because I am far more familiar with the U.S. context; moreover, the Spanish Caribbean, the subject of this essay, has historically been more closely linked with the U.S. than with Europe.

Both the U.S. and Europe have been profoundly influenced by African musical aesthetics, which underpin most U.S. popular musics (from jazz to rap) which have then been disseminated to Europe. The influence from the Caribbean, on the other hand, has been more specific and recent: since the 1920s, a continuous series of dance crazes from the Caribbean, such as *calypso*, *mambo* and *cha cha*, have been introduced to the United States and Europe (Roberts 1985). However, outside of cities with large Latino populations such as New York City, these musics were seldom performed in their original styles; rather, they were often disseminated through stylized imitations performed by U.S. artists. For example, the famous Cuban song "*El Manicero*" ("The Peanut Vendor") became known throughout the United States not by Don Azpiazu, its popularizer in Cuba (and New York City), but by Louis Armstrong. While a few Caribbean musicians such as Harry Belafonte and Desi Arnaz did succeed in becoming household words in the north, the original musical aesthetics were often considerably transformed in order to make the music palatable to non-Caribbean audiences, and little resembled what was being heard in the Caribbean itself. Moreover, these musical fads were often short-lived, and seldom led to further interest in the musical cultures of the various countries of origin.

In the 1960s this scenario began to change in response to increased immigration from the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean and Africa to their post-colonial metropolises; migrants from the Spanish Caribbean, on the other hand, gravitated towards New York City, since that region's post-colonial connections have been stronger with the United States than with Spain. In demand by the growing number of immigrant residents, musics from each of these regions became more accessible in northern hemisphere cities. Local record shops and radio programming, oriented towards specific immigrant communities, exposed these musics not just to their intended audiences, but to anyone curious enough to pay attention. Immigrants from the various regions of the diaspora, living in close proximity with one another, initiated a new cycle of musical exchange be-

tween the Caribbean and Africa, as well as with the popular culture and music of the host country.

The musical cross-fertilization between north and south began to bear commercial fruits in the early 1970s. The first Third World artist to penetrate northern pop markets and to become an international superstar was Bob Marley, a young Jamaican musician who, while he was visiting England, obtained a contract with the then-small and struggling Island Records, thereby gaining access to non-Jamaican audiences. Marley's music, a hybrid of mento-influenced *ska* and U.S. rhythm and blues known in Jamaica as reggae, successfully "crossed over" to First World audiences. While Marley's talent should not be underestimated, it is also true that his timing was right: he was able to tap into a growing receptivity on the part of Western musicians and audiences—alienated by both the increasingly formulaic disco and the pretentious art rock of the late 1970s—to a fresh and energetic new sound. Moreover, reggae, sung in English, was easily accessible to a wide range of English-speaking (if not Anglo) international audiences. Other Third World musicians (such as Jamaica's Millie Small and Johnny Nash, Cameroon's Manu Dibango or South Africa's Miriam Makeba) had been able to briefly penetrate First World pop markets, but Marley was the first musician from the Third World to establish himself within the First World musical establishment as a pop star rather than as musical exotica. Marley's success eventually went far beyond his First World and Jamaican audiences, extending throughout the non-Anglophone Africa and Caribbean; there, even language differences could not obstruct Marley's powerful pan-African message, which was avidly received by black audiences worldwide.

Reggae's success encouraged the diversification of the musical landscape. Since the colonial metropolises offered recording and production facilities lacking in the colonies, they were particularly attractive to musicians anxious to record. There, a young generation of Caribbean and African immigrant musicians learned to manipulate the increasingly sophisticated recording techniques and technologies (i.e. electric guitars, synthesizers, multi-track recording, etc.) necessary for producing modern pop, allowing them to create music that sounded as professional and could be as competitive as that of their northern counterparts. Rather than simply imitating northern popular music, however, these multi-culturally saavy musicians began translating their musical traditions into the Western pop idiom, and in the process, making these musical hybrids at once more appealing to their urban-oriented compatriots as well as to First World audiences. As world beat producer and commentator Georges Collinet recalls,

things really started to happen. Musicianship was getting better. And this was a generation that hadn't grown up with the white man's influence that the other guys had felt. They were more sure of themselves, more aggressive. They knew they were bringing something new, something special, something of quality—and the public was ready (quoted in Gonzalez 1990:B34).

In the early 1980s African music entered the limelight, often through the same channels originally established to disseminate reggae. For example, Island Records, a company whose spectacular growth was largely due to Bob Marley's success, sought after his death to find an artist who could attract the same sort of attention from international audiences. After examining the dynamic African pop music scene that was emerging in both London and Paris among immigrant communities, Island selected King Sunny Adé from English-speaking Nigeria to be Marley's successor, passing up other French-speaking groups that were beginning to emerge in Paris. Adé's records and 1981 international tour, especially tailored for non-African audiences, were well financed and heavily promoted by Island Records. Following the widespread interest in Adé's tour, Island released two compilations of African pop from Francophone West Africa, "*Sound D'Afrique*," Volumes I and II. Adé himself was never able to replicate Marley's success, but Island's efforts to introduce Afropop to international audiences were successful (Stapleton & May 1990). Other mail order houses and labels (such as the U.S.-based Schanachie) which had begun specializing in reggae distribution in the late 1970s, also began moving into African music around 1982.

As the interest in Third World pop grew, so did the range of musics incorporated under the expanding world beat umbrella. Around 1985 music from the French and other parts of the English Caribbean began making an impact on the world beat marketplace, followed by music from Brazil. Taking advantage of these new musical sources as well as of the growing demand for non-Anglo-Saxon music, rock musicians such as Paul Simon and David Byrne also began to experiment with African styles, often generating criticism for appropriating other cultures' musical resources. Later, recordings such as GlobeStyles' "Accordions That Shook the World" series and Mickey Hart's "Planet Drum" brought in less pop-oriented music. Other national or regional artists as diverse as the Yemenite Ofra Hazah and the Bulgarian women's chorus were also marketed as world beat.

African and Caribbean pop styles and their musicians could not have achieved such sustained exposure in the United States and Europe without the support and encouragement of a specialized infrastructure to pro-

mote them that emerged in the early 1980s. For example, new record companies such as the U.K.-based Earthworks (1982) and GlobeStyle (1985) emerged, dedicated exclusively to promoting the music of Africa and the Caribbean to an ever thirstier First World market (Stapleton & May 1990). World beat radio programming helped bring the new musical offerings to the attention of northern consumers. In the U.S., world beat shows with titles such as "African Beat" featuring these new releases were added to college radio programming in the early 1980s. In 1988 an even more effective channel for exposing world beat music to U.S. audiences became available with the appearance of Sean Barlow and George Collinet's nationally-syndicated public radio show "Afropop," renamed "Afropop Worldwide" in 1990 to reflect its widening coverage of Caribbean, South America and U.S. musics.

In urban areas, specialty record shops sprang up to sell world beat recordings, while new mail order distributors of records and books were targeted at non-urban consumers lacking access to record stores. In the U.S., for example, John Storm Roberts established a mail-order enterprise, "Original Music," in 1982, at first specializing in recordings of African and Latin American musics, but later adding selections from Asia and the Middle East as well (Miles 1992). Newsletters and magazines appeared, containing advertisements for world beat releases being offered by the increasing number of specialty retail outlets, as well as articles on new recordings, musicians and styles.

In the mid-1980s, the exposure of African-derived musics to U.S. and European audiences was given tremendous impetus by some of the so-called "charity rock" mega-events, a number of which, such as Sun City and the Mandela concerts, focused on African political issues (Garofalo 1992). Smaller-scale but explicitly international popular music festivals also made their appearance in the early 1980s. For example, the multicultural WOMAD (World of Music and Dance) festival, which featured both traditional and popular musics, was inaugurated in England in 1982, and a follow-up recording of the performances was released internationally. By the end of the decade, WOMAD had become an international organization sponsoring multiple such concerts as well as follow-up recordings; for example, in 1992, WOMAD sponsored as many as seven such events in the U.K. (Sinclair 1992).

World beat's meteoric development can be observed neatly in the trajectory of its principal U.S. publication, "Beat" magazine, which began in 1982 as a local Los Angeles newsletter called the "Reggae Beat." In 1984 it changed its name to the "Reggae and African Beat," reflecting the wid-

ening interest in Afropop. In 1985 it began printing articles about French and English Caribbean music as well. By 1989, now a glossy and successful magazine with national circulation, it again had to change its name, this time to simply "Beat" magazine, with the words "Reggae, African, Caribbean, World Music" written across the masthead. Ever extending its coverage, in 1992 "Beat" included a cover feature on the music of India.



Fig. 1. Cover of "Beat Magazine"

This emerging commercial infrastructure deliberately targeted a new group of First World consumers, who for the most part were affluent, well-educated, and cosmopolitan. World beat entrepreneurs correctly perceived that in order to continue to successfully promote world beat musics, they needed to maintain an active and dedicated (albeit small) group of buyers, which they could do by appealing to an interest in Third World cultures typical of the post-1960s generations. Accordingly, world beat products and services have been characterized by an educational component visible in such innovations as extensive liner notes,<sup>4</sup> well-annotated catalogues, and, in the case of the mass media, articles and programs featuring not only current releases, hits and stars, but including as well in-depth features on such topics as the origins of the various styles, or on the cultural (and sometimes political) contexts characterizing the "home" countries of the various musics. These strategies have been quite successful, as world beat and its European equivalent, world music, have become a permanent, and increasingly profitable sector of the international popular music industry.

## 2. The Spanish Caribbean in the World Beat Arena

Given world beat's dazzling success story, it is easy to overlook one extraordinary fact; that in the U.S. the music of the Spanish Caribbean is only barely visible in the margins of this picture. For example, with the exception of Rubén Blades' participation in the 1985 Sun City video, Spanish Caribbean music was conspicuously absent from the various multi-cultural mega-events such as Live Aid taking place in the 1980s that gave valuable international exposure to African musicians. Spanish Caribbean music is poorly represented in most of the mail order catalogues catering to world beat audiences. Often, it is not found in record store sections labelled "world music," where world beat fans are likely to seek out new offerings, but instead, in a separate Latin music section.

Again using "Beat" magazine as an indicator of world beat trends, Spanish Caribbean music was not even mentioned in its pages until 1989, and then only tangentially, in the year-end "Best Of" lists, in which a few Spanish Caribbean artists were mentioned. As of this writing, "Beat" magazine has yet to dedicate a single article to any major music from the Spanish Caribbean—*salsa*, *merengue* or *cumbia*—even though they have the sort of strong African origins or aesthetics favored by world beat fans. Brazilian popular music, on the other hand, was featured in a 1991

cover story, and new developments in Brazilian music are discussed in a regular column called "Brazil Beat." While this may not be the case in Europe, it is clear that at least in the U.S., the latecomer and wallflower at the world beat party has been music from the Spanish Caribbean.

I am not suggesting that Spanish Caribbean musics are totally absent from the U.S. world beat arena; musics from the Spanish Caribbean have in fact enjoyed some of the benefits of world beat. For example, National Public Radio's "Afropop Worldwide" has provided some excellent coverage of Spanish Caribbean music, and John Storm Roberts' Original Music catalogue offers a healthy variety of Spanish Caribbean selections. David Byrne has exposed U.S. audiences to Cuban musical styles through the "Dancing with the Enemy" series released on his Luaka Bop label; moreover, he himself has experimented with several Spanish Caribbean genres on his 1989 recording "*Rei Momo*." In spite of these exceptions, however, it remains true that the non-Latino world beat consumer—at least in the United States—is far less likely to encounter music and information about music from the Spanish Caribbean than from other regions of the world.

Why should musics from the Spanish Caribbean, which are musically and commercially analogous to other musics under the world beat umbrella, receive this differential treatment in the U.S.? I suspect that both economic logic and social ideology contribute to the marginality of Spanish Caribbean musics in the U.S. The most superficial explanation is that Spanish Caribbean musics have long enjoyed a well-developed infrastructure and large audiences among U.S. Latino communities and simply have not needed the special promotion efforts that other Caribbean and African musics have required in order to penetrate First World countries and markets. A number of authors, most notably John Storm Roberts (1985), have amply documented the influence of Latin music in the U.S., typically pointing to dance music crazes such as the *mambo* and the *cha cha*. However, as I mentioned above, outside cities such as New York, these musics were seldom heard in their original versions, and remained, as musical *exotica*, restricted to the periphery of the nation's popular music landscape. The reality is that while Spanish Caribbean musics have indeed flourished within Latino communities, elsewhere in the U.S. they have remained largely inaccessible to Anglo consumers not living in a city with a sizable Latino population. In consequence, Spanish Caribbean musicians' economic possibilities in this country have remained circumscribed within the boundaries of the Latino community, a situation which some Spanish Caribbean musicians such as Rubén Blades have tried to change by tailoring their music to non-Latino audiences. The film "Crosso-

ver Dreams," in which Blades stars, eloquently testifies to the frustrations of *salsa* musicians wanting to reach out to the larger Anglo audience.

A more likely explanation for the marginality of Spanish Caribbean musics might be that in the U.S., these musics have been the victim of a subtle yet pervasive form of racism, in which Latinos have been stereotyped as greasers and their culture as flashy and vulgar, lacking in the sort of qualities that might interest mainstream audiences. In a recent "New York Times" feature, music and culture critic Enrique Fernandez observed that while African-American culture has fascinated the American public for decades—as evidenced by its visibility in film, television and popular music—Latinos are barely visible in the U.S. media, and then usually trapped within stereotypical roles such as violent drug dealers, lazy and vain pimps, or hot headed seductresses (Fernandez 1992). Ethnomusicology itself has not been immune to this sort of discrimination; as early as 1978, Joe Blum observed that the absence of scholarly interest in *salsa* reflected class and race prejudice: *salsa*, he suggested, so closely associated with poor Puerto Rican immigrants in U.S. cities, invoked a series of uncomfortable political and economic realities difficult for researchers to face. In this country, it seems, the sounds of *salsa* and *merengue* may simply not be as appealing to world beat consumers as the music of exotic—and less numerous or more safely distant—others.

On the other hand, Spanish Caribbeans themselves may share some of the responsibility for their musics' position vis-à-vis world beat. Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos alike, understandably sensitive about their historical vulnerability to the overwhelming force of U.S. cultural hegemony, may not have pursued the world beat market more actively precisely because it is so closely associated with and dominated by Anglos, both in the U.S. and Europe. From the perspective of Latinos' efforts to resist the assimilationist melting pot and to maintain an independent, separate identity, it may have been more advantageous to keep some distance between their musical domain and the rather amorphous domain of world beat, however much that position may have limited the possibilities for participating in a potentially profitable new international market. *Salsa* in particular stood to lose some of its symbolic power as a symbol of pan-Latin identity if it were subsumed under the world beat umbrella.

### 3. The Spanish Caribbean and the Imagined Diasporic Community

One can also venture into the domain of race relations to explain the position of Spanish Caribbean music within the world beat landscape.

While world beat technically includes any pop-oriented music that is not Anglo-Saxon, musics from Africa and the African diaspora are unarguably the most numerous and prominent sub-group of this larger category of music; the very preference in the U.S. for the term "world beat" rather than the more all-inclusive term "world music" tacitly acknowledges the primacy of rhythm, so essential to African musical aesthetics. In creative terms, then, the most powerful forces behind the extraordinary success of the world beat phenomenon have clearly been black musicians from Africa or from the disparate regions of the diaspora. Many of the musicians participating in the world beat marketplace explicitly express the importance of black pride and pan-African solidarity through song texts, while others express these ideas implicitly, for example, by adopting dreadlocks or using traditional African clothing. Underlying these signs, there appears to be a vision of, after Benedict Anderson (1983), an imagined diasporic community of which all black people, musicians and audiences alike, are a part. Spanish Caribbeans themselves, however, have expressed little interest in belonging to this community. In the Spanish Caribbean, in spite of a clearly racially-mixed population, public discourse has long been dominated by a racist ideology that has deliberately ignored or downplayed the region's African heritage in favor of a more Iberocentric identity. Given these racial prejudices, the Pan-African ideology implicit in the world beat phenomenon was less likely to lead most Spanish Caribbeans to emphasize their own African roots, to seek musical or cultural connections with their predominantly black neighbors or with Africa, nor to seek a more central position under the world beat umbrella.

Let me explore these somewhat provocative assertions in more detail. While it is true that the concepts of *négritude*, stressing racial uplift and pride, have been influential in both Puerto Rico and Cuba, the same cannot be said of other Spanish Caribbean countries such as the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Panama or Venezuela. Moreover, throughout the region, even in Cuba and Puerto Rico, these intellectual values of racial equality and democracy are not reflected in popular practice, where whiteness has been consistently favored over blackness, and black culture in general has been regarded with uneasy suspicion or active dislike. Vernon Boggs, for example, points out that in the 1930s many Puerto Ricans shunned Afro-Cuban music because of its drumming, so closely associated with black culture (1992:354), and clung to the more Europeanized *danza*. Even today, many Puerto Ricans, despite the fact that a large proportion of the island's inhabitants are of African descent, prefer to identify the music that symbolizes the national identity as either the Eu-

ropean-derived *danza* or the *jíbaro* music associated with white peasant farmers. Similarly, in the Dominican Republic the *merengue* of the predominantly white Cibao region has come to symbolize the country's national identity rather than the more widespread *baile de palos* which is associated with that country's darker-skinned people (Davis 1983:47).

Given the region's history of ambivalence towards its own darker-skinned population, it is not surprising that Spanish Caribbeans in general have expressed little interest in the popular music of their non-Spanish speaking neighbors, whose populations are predominantly black. Language barriers have exaggerated but not caused the lack of cultural interactions between these countries; Dominicans' ignorance of neighboring Haiti's contemporary popular music, for example, is more a consequence of the country's virulent racism than of language differences.<sup>5</sup> Tellingly, popular music from the U.S., while in English and frequently displaying prominent African aesthetics, does not have the same association with blackness and has always been readily accepted throughout the region. Until recently, then, musical exchange in the Spanish Caribbean typically occurred only within its own linguistic and cultural domain; for example, Colombian musicians borrowed freely from Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Dominican music, but not from Haitian or Jamaican music (and much less from contemporary African music).

Clearly, these are broad generalizations about racial identity in the Spanish Caribbean, and exceptions can be found; most of these do not disprove the rule. One significant exception comes to mind, however, and must be addressed. When *salsa* emerged as a recognizable musical category in New York City in the mid to late 1960s, many of its musicians, hailing from various parts of the Spanish Caribbean, were of African descent. Inspired and encouraged by the contemporaneous civil rights and black pride movements, a number of their song lyrics explored the issues of racism and race consciousness, and *salsa's* African-derived percussion was explicitly celebrated as such. By the 1980s, however, at the time the world beat phenomenon began to emerge, the more Afrocentric *salsa*, whose practitioners might have been inclined to identify with world beat's implicit pan-African ideology, had largely disappeared from view: the once politically incisive and rhythmically hard-driving *salsa dura* had been marginalized by the newer *salsa sensual*, a highly commercialized variant of *salsa* in which romantic *balada* (ballad) lyrics are set to slick but percussively insipid musical accompaniments. Simultaneously, a number of talented *salsa* musicians were increasingly turning away from the dance music format to experiment with jazz. As a result, in the early

1980s, *salsa* no longer dominated the Latin dance music scene, and its more Afrocentric messages had largely disappeared from view. *Salsa* was superseded in commercial importance by the more energetic, fast-paced Dominican *merengue*. Unlike Cubans and Puerto Ricans, the Dominicans, coming from the most notoriously Afrophobic culture in the Spanish Caribbean (see Pacini Hernandez 1991, 1992b), were little inclined to draw attention to the African roots of their music nor to any commonalities they might share with the music of their Afro-Caribbean neighbors.

#### 4. A View from the South: World Beat and the Spanish Caribbean in the 1990s

Nevertheless, while the Spanish Caribbean was not a central player in the development of world beat in the 1980s and is still marginal within the northern world beat marketplace, in the 1990s the region has—from a Caribbean perspective—begun responding to the increased circulation of diverse musics made available by world beat, although in ways neither intended nor controlled by the world beat industry located in the First World. To be sure, most of the profits generated by world beat remain in the First World metropolises, but it is also true that a decade after the world beat industry emerged, the increased exposure given to the wide spectrum of world beat musics is beginning to stimulate musical production in the Spanish Caribbean, where audiences are now seeking access to a wider range of music, and musicians are seizing upon them as raw material for creative experimentation.

This brings me back to the observation I made earlier that multilateral channels of musical interactions are opening up among the various Caribbean countries themselves as well as with Africa. This process, initiated in northern multi-cultural metropolises like New York or Miami, is by now taking place in the Spanish Caribbean itself, where innovative musicians are dipping freely into world beat's diverse musical repertoires and have begun producing a variety of musical hybrids combining Spanish Caribbean with French or English Caribbean rhythms, and increasingly, with contemporary African elements as well. I myself am not certain whether these changes simply reflect an increasingly cosmopolitan cultural perspective resulting from international travel and migration, or whether they are the consequence of other political or economic transformations. For whatever reasons, it is becoming increasingly clear that since 1990, musical ex-

change between the Spanish Caribbean and the non-Spanish Caribbean, as well as with Africa, has been breaking through long-standing linguistic and cultural boundaries with much greater frequency and deliberateness than in the past.

*Reggae en español* (along with its closely-related cousin, U.S. hip hop) has become the most popular non-Spanish Caribbean music in the region, especially among the young, and is being produced throughout the region, from Honduras (e.g. Arzu and La Diva) to Puerto Rico (e.g. Lisa M), and even beyond to non-Caribbean parts of Latin America (e.g. Mexico's "Los Caifanes"). Panama—which not coincidentally has a significant population of black immigrants from Jamaica—has produced the



Fig. 2. Cover of a "Reggae en español" recording

most successful Spanish reggae musicians, Nando Boom and El General, as well as a number of women reggae singers such as *La Atrevida*, Rude Girl. West Indian *soca* is also becoming widely popular in Spanish-speaking Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, in response to which some English Caribbean *soca* musicians such as Oscar James have begun producing Spanish-language versions of their music specifically targeted at Spanish Caribbean audiences. On the north coast of Colombia, a region which is geographically as well as culturally Caribbean, self-consciously Afrocentric groups such as "Anne Zwing" have begun producing their own hybrid versions of *soca*, reggae and African *soukous*, as well as modernized versions of a locally-specific African-derived tradition, the *chandé*. In Cuba, groups such as "Mezcla" are producing music influenced by contemporary Afropop as well as by the music of the English and French Caribbean.<sup>6</sup> Two of the Dominican Republic's most famous musicians, Wilfrido Vargas and Juan Luis Guerra, have both released recordings that included cuts either styled after—or directly plagiarized from—music from the non-Spanish Caribbean, as well as from Africa itself; for example, Juan Luis Guerra's grammy-winning recording "*Bachata Rosa*," includes a Spanish-language, *merengue*-ized cover of "Dede Priscilla," a song from the Central African Republic that originally appeared on Island's 1982 "*Sound D'Afrique*" Volume II.

These new trends can perhaps best be observed in the trajectory of the *punta*. *Punta* is a hybrid musical form combining traditional Garifuna (descendants of Amerindians and escaped black slaves) elements with contemporary English Caribbean popular music, which emerged in the 1980s from English-speaking Belize. As described in a "Beat" feature article, "Clearly Caribbean, somewhat African and totally frenetic with tropical dance fever, *punta* rock is the kind of electrified yet traditional Third World rhythm that's feeding the world beat market" (Miller 1991). The *punta*, which has a particular dance step associated with it, became a dance craze in the Spanish Caribbean in 1991, after a Spanish version of the original English *punta* hit, "Conch Soup," was released by the Honduran band, "La Banda Blanca," as "*Sopa de Caracol*." Since then, Honduran bands as well as other Spanish Caribbean imitators have released dozens of other *punta* songs, both original and covers, in which *merengue* influences can be also be heard—thereby encouraging Spanish Caribbeans' erroneous belief that *punta* is of Honduran rather than Belizean origin.

In considering this new multi-lateral movement of musical styles, it is important to point out that non-Spanish Caribbean musics have not been

introduced to the region via the world beat industry operating in the north. In the Spanish Caribbean there is no extensive world beat press or radio programming informing listeners about musical origins and influences, and the practice of including educational liner notes typical of world beat recordings in the north has not yet been widely adopted in the Spanish Caribbean—although this is beginning to change. Moreover, when borrowing does occur, musical sources are rarely credited on recordings. As a result, Spanish Caribbean audiences usually do not know where a particular song or song style originates—as happened with the *punta*. Hence, the sort of musical tourism characterizing northern consumers is not occurring in the south.

On the other hand, the lack of adequate information can also perpetuate national and racial prejudices. For example, authorship of Juan Luis Guerra's version of the African song "Dede Priscilla" mentioned above—renamed in Spanish "*A pedir su mano*"—is credited to one Lea Lignazi. However, given the Spanish title and the absence of any notes explaining the song's origins, there is no way Dominican consumers can know that it is from the Central African Republic. Moreover, Guerra's music video of this song further obscured the song's origin by inserting footage showing dancers of both *gaga*, a musical form associated with Haitian cane-cutters, and *guloya*, a dance associated with *cocolos*, West Indian migrants to the Dominican Republic. Not surprisingly, I once found myself having a vigorous argument with a highly cultivated and internationally-travelled Dominican intellectual, who attributed the song's non-Dominican flavor to the influence of the *cocolos*. He was prepared, then, to concede the song's Afro-Caribbean influences, but was absolutely unwilling to accept an African origin. I find it disappointing that Guerra, whose musical background is in the politically-inspired *nueva canción* movement of the 1970s, did not take steps to avoid these cultural misperceptions nor take the opportunity to lend some legitimacy to contemporary African culture, so sorely lacking in his Afrophobic country. Clearly, Third World musicians can be as unscrupulous in appropriating others' musics as the much-criticized First World musicians such as Paul Simon and David Byrne.

I would like to return briefly to the issue I raised earlier concerning the impact of transnational and transcultural interactions upon local cultures by focusing on the career and music of one Spanish Caribbean musician who best reflects this changing musical landscape. Colombian Joe Arroyo became famous in his country as an outstanding *salsa* singer in the 1970s, but since the 1980s he has been producing the sort of African and Afro-Caribbean-influenced music associated with world beat. Some

of his music, inspired by French and English Caribbean genres, he calls *caribeños*; his *salsas*, reflecting the influence of contemporary Afropop, he calls *joesons*, and he calls his re-Africanized *cumbias* "cumbiones." While he still specializes in *salsa*, Arroyo's highly eclectic repertoire has earned him an extraordinary following throughout Colombia itself and is moving him into the northern world beat orbit—the only Colombian pop musician to have done so. In contrast, Colombia's other outstanding *salsa* groups such as "Grupo Niche," who never venture beyond the parameters of orthodox *salsa*, are still restricted to the largely segregated Latin music category in the U.S.

It is encouraging to note that Arroyo's excursions into non-Spanish Caribbean styles have not led him to abandon local genres, but rather to revitalize them. Most of the coast's traditional genres such as the *cumbia*, *porro* and *gaita* had been swept aside and forgotten during the *salsa* boom of the late 1960s. Arroyo resuscitated the moribund coastal *cumbia* by reintroducing the hot, syncopated rhythms that had been virtually eliminated since the late 1960s, when *cumbias* began to be specially-tailored for export to Central America and the Andean region (see Pacini Hernandez 1992a). Arroyo's modern *cumbias*, fully Afro-Caribbean in feel, have inspired a young generation of Colombian coastal musicians to begin working again in the *cumbia* idiom. The ripple effect has also benefited other previously stagnant coastal genres such as the *porro*, which is similarly being revitalized and reinterpreted for modern *orquestas*. I was recently told by a successful Cartagena bandleader that a few years ago, working *orquestas* played only *salsa* and *merengue*; today they are also expected to play *cumbias* and *porros*, and they often include French and English Caribbean-inspired *caribeños* as well. In Colombia, then, world beat has expanded rather than decreased the musical horizon, by reclaiming the country's own African musical heritage, as well as those from the non-Spanish Caribbean and Africa, as sources and inspiration for musical experimentation.

While northern multi-cultural metropolises have remained important sites of cultural interaction and continue to exert a powerful influence on musical developments in the Spanish Caribbean, it is also true that a healthy proportion of these transcultural hybrids are also being produced and consumed within the Spanish Caribbean itself, where a world-beat-like industry seems to be emerging that is locally controlled. One indicator is the appearance of multicultural music festivals that have been established within the region. Unlike other pan-Caribbean festivals such as Carifesta that focused on folk traditions, and other major Caribbean festi-

vals such as Reggae Sunsplash and Trinidadian Carnival, that (until recently)<sup>7</sup> featured only one genre of music sung in one language, the explicitly articulated intent of this new genre of festival has been to showcase fully commercial popular musics from throughout the region, crossing linguistic boundaries and even, in the case of one of these festivals, including music from Africa as well. Together, these festivals—organized and financed within the Spanish Caribbean itself—have exposed musics from throughout the region not only to their local audiences, but to an increasing number of visitors from throughout the region attracted to these events. Of those exposed to these diverse musics, the most important—in terms of musical exchange—are the invited performers themselves, who have the opportunity to observe and converse with musicians from throughout the region.

The first and most long-running such festival is the "Festival de Música del Caribe," that takes place in Cartagena, a predominantly-black city located on Colombia's north coast. In 1983, two upper class Cartagena entrepreneurs with the musical and commercial savvy to sense the incipient world beat phenomenon organized what was to become an annual music festival designed to showcase representative, commercially popular groups from all over the Caribbean. Since then, the *Festival de Música del Caribe* has exposed Cartagena audiences to live appearances by major performers of reggae, *zouk*, *soca*, *compas*, as well as Spanish Caribbean dance musics such as Cuban *son*, Dominican *merengue*, Puerto Rican *plena*, and of course, Colombian *salsa* and *vallenato*; since 1986, popular African bands have been invited to participate as well. Each year the festival celebrates one of Colombia's pioneer musicians or ensembles, thereby adding a chronological component to the foregrounded spatial dimensions of the region's musical heritage. Moreover, in consonance with world beat's strategy of educating its audience, the festival's format also includes a two-day cultural forum, in which academic and media experts on Caribbean music and culture from throughout the region are invited to present papers. In 1987, inspired by the Cartagena festival's success, a similar pan-regional music and cultural event called the "Green Moon Festival" was inaugurated on San Andrés, a small, Colombian-owned island off the coast in Nicaragua, whose population, descended from West Indians, is primarily black and English-speaking. While much smaller in scale than the Cartagena festival, the Green Moon Festival also features contemporary popular musics from throughout the Caribbean. By putting diverse Caribbean musics on the same stage, both festivals have succeeded in highlighting their common African origins.

I do not want to give the mistaken impression that African-derived musics are now dominating either Colombia's or the Spanish Caribbean's musical landscape. I suspect that coastal Colombia is in the vanguard rather than in the mainstream of regional musical developments, and that the transformations taking place there are simply foreshadowing new patterns of musical interactions that are just now becoming visible elsewhere in the region. Colombia, like the rest of the Spanish Caribbean, has a similar history of rejecting its African heritage, and most Colombians were initially reluctant to accept these unfamiliar musics whose African aesthetics were so pronounced. As a result, all non-Hispanophone Caribbean and African popular musics, that were being referred to as world beat in the north, were disparagingly labelled as *música champeta*, the word *cham-*



Fig. 3. Cover of a terapia record

*peta* intending to invoke the crudeness of a small, homemade machete of that name associated with unskilled black laborers. However, as the 1980s proceeded and these musics began to acquire more respectability and exposure, a new marketing term was invented to make them more respectable: *música terapia*, or "therapy" music, suggesting that letting oneself go to the energy of these formerly socially-taboo musics would generate a desirable "feel-good" quality.

Taking advantage of world beat musics' increasing popularity, a new breed of entrepreneurs emerged from Colombia's northern cities, Barranquilla and Cartagena, eager to tap the growing local market for *terapia*. Using sophisticated equipment, well-financed record pirates began reproducing high quality vinyl recordings of world beat releases remastered from CDs or records purchased abroad and issuing them in professionally-looking record jackets.<sup>8</sup> True to world beat's spirit of eclecticism, these pirate releases are in the compilation rather than single-artist format: drawing uninhibitedly from recordings originating anywhere in the Caribbean and Africa, producers lift any cut they consider will interest local listeners, whether it be the latest hit by a well-known international star or something totally obscure. They ignore completely the sorts of linguistic and cultural boundaries (not to mention copyright laws) that record companies would have considered unsurmountable obstacles just a few short years ago. Clearly, the *terapia* music business, world beat's Colombian counterpart, is responding to local preferences and keeping its profits at home, and thereby challenging the hegemony of both national and international record companies, who have traditionally tried to keep Colombian audiences within the boundaries of the Spanish Caribbean and U.S. pop musical orbits.

In summary, then, while Spanish Caribbean music has not played a major part in world beat developments in the north, from a southern perspective significant transnational and transcultural musical exchange is taking place within the region and even with Africa. If, as Simon Frith says, "music both creates and articulates the very idea of community," and helps people "to make sense of their social world and their place in it" (1992:177), then the implications of these musical interactions upon concepts of local, national and racial identities must be profound indeed: because the community being articulated is not defined by national borders nor shared language, but rather by the region's common African musical roots. In this community, one can claim citizenship by listening to and borrowing from others' musics. Clearly, this is an imagined community, as its members do not even speak the same language or share the same geo-

graphical space; but it is a symbolically powerful one nevertheless, one which hopefully will exert a positive influence upon a region so long fractured by racial and cultural cleavages inherited from its colonial past.

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## Notes

- 1 Laing 1986, Manuel 1988, Goodwin & Gore 1990, Thompson 1991, Garofalo 1992.
- 2 I define the Spanish Caribbean as Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, as well as the Caribbean coastal areas of other Spanish-speaking nations in the Caribbean basin such as Colombia, Panama and Venezuela.
- 3 See Stapleton & May 1990 for a useful section on the world beat music industry and the diaspora.
- 4 In terms of their liner notes, the character of commercially-oriented, pop world beat recordings must be distinguished from collections of traditional music (such as "Folkways"), whose extensive liner notes were targeted more at specialists and music teachers rather than to general pop audiences.
- 5 In 1987, while doing field work in the Dominican Republic, I played a tape of some highly danceable Zairean *soukous* to some young Dominicans whose favorite music was early *salsa*, and who I was sure would enjoy the infectious rhythms of contemporary Afropop. Within minutes, they removed the tape, saying they didn't like it because it sounded too Haitian.
- 6 The Cuban situation is somewhat different from that of the rest of the Spanish Caribbean; travel, educational and cultural exchanges between Cuba and Africa have been much more active than anywhere else in the region.
- 7 In 1991, however, Reggae Sunsplash began including a World Beat Caribbean night, which has included performances by musicians from Brazil, Mexico and France as well as from other English Caribbean countries such as Grenada and Trinidad (anon. 1992:13).
- 8 It is interesting to note that recordings of Afro-Caribbean and African music, both pirate and legitimate, are exclusively vinyl.

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