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Reflections on Global Reggae

Chapter 10 of *Likkle but Talawah (Small but Mighty): Reggae Music, Globalization, and the Birth of a Social Movement* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Bowling Green State University)

The Political Economy of Pop

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Remaking Bob Marley: Global Branding of a Soul Rebel

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REFLECTIONS ON GLOBAL REGGAE

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Chapter 10 of Likkle but Talawah (Small but Mighty):
Reggae Music, Globalization, and the Birth of a Social Movement
(Ph.D. Dissertation, Bowling Green State University)

If there is anything I have learned in the 10 years since I began trying to document reggae (first for newspapers and a book; later for this dissertation), it is that cultural phenomena refuse to hold still long enough for a thorough examination. Many things have changed since the first interview in 1990; some participants are deceased (Mikey Wallace, Panhead, Don Taylor and Garnett Silk) and others have made major changes in direction (Carlene Davis, Lieutenant Stitchie and Judy Mowatt are all singing Christian music). The music industry itself has been transformed by mega-mergers -- who could have anticipated even a few years ago that the charts in 2000 would be dominated by teenage pop stars? To conclude this lengthy study, I will turn to my research notes and recollections in an effort to give additional resonance to some of the major themes of the study.

(10.1) “Nuh Reggae ‘Pon Mi Radio”

The Senior Common Room, or faculty club, at the University of the West Indies in Mona, Jamaica, is only a few miles as the crow flies from the Kingston ghettos that spawned reggae music, but it could be on another continent and in another century. I am here for the month of July 1997 to finish the interviews for this study, and I feel that I am crossing a cultural divide as I taxi back and forth between “downtown,” where the studios and musicians are, and “uptown,” the quiet, verdant Mona campus.

There are inexpensive and secure rooms for rent and a dining room serving one or two lunch specials on weekdays. Besides the dining room, there is a large banquet hall and smaller rooms for meetings, drama rehearsals and other functions. The whole enterprise is managed by a charming but no-nonsense woman in her 70s who brooks no disrespect from staff or guests. The S.C.R. bar, a watering hole so notorious that it has been cited as co-respondent in more than one faculty divorce (or so I’m told), overlooks the swimming pool and tennis courts. The pool is algae-filled and uninviting; the pump is broken and there are no replacement parts. The tennis courts bring in a steady flow of thirsty customers.

Besides a few Jamaicans who work at the university, the regulars at the bar are mostly expatriate types, Europeans and Africans in their 50s, who came to UWI Mona from abroad and stayed because they liked the lifestyle. A few appear furtive, as if they harbor guilty secrets. They drink, talk, argue, play dominoes or stare into space. There is little to indicate that we are in Jamaica -- we could just as well be in India or Australia. There is no music playing except on weekends, when the bartender is allowed to bring in a boombox. In the birthplace

of reggae, he plays North American soul and disco oldies. When I remark on the irony of this, the bartender says that he prefers Beres Hammond or Dennis Brown, but this is what the customers want.

On weekends, the facilities -- which open onto onto a shady lawn and picturesque ruins that are dramatically spotlighted by night -- are much in demand by UWI administrators, faculty, staff and alumni for private gatherings. One Saturday during my stay, there is a graduation party in the afternoon followed by a wedding reception in the evening. "Only in Jamaica," I think, as I watch a crew of teen-aged boys unload refrigerator-sized speaker cabinets from a stakebed truck and set up the mammoth ghetto-style sound system that will be used for both of these quintessentially middle-class events.

All week I've been hearing Jamaican music experts like Dermot Hussey and Gussie Clarke tell me how few young instrumentalists are coming up in Kingston these days in comparison with the hordes of aspiring DJs and singers. They say that music programs at places like Alpha Boys School (a Catholic "reform school" which trained many important musicians of the ska, rocksteady and reggae generations) are closing down because they can't afford to buy instruments. The graduation party at the S.C.R. brings a crowd of dressed-up kids and parents involved in a different kind of music program: a Suzuki-method school that teaches the European classics to middle-class Jamaican children. Their tiny violins are sitting out on display when I pass by. Later that night at the wedding reception, North American R&B hits and Trinidadian soca boom out over the huge sound system. I sit upstairs in my room and listen. No reggae, roots or dancehall, is heard all night.

Everybody says it's a bad time for the Jamaican music business, with no hits out of here in a couple of years. Each year there seem to be fewer Jamaican records on the international reggae charts and more competition from U.S.- and U.K.-based artists. Gussie Clarke says Jamaican producers bear a lot of the blame for making records and not making music -- rush-releasing substandard dreck just to capitalize on the name of a flavor-of-the-month DJ or singer while he or she is still popular. Lloyd Stanbury says flatly that record labels still want to put out reggae, but are tired of dealing with the baggage that comes with many Jamaican artists -- hangers-on, unreasonable demands for money, unreliability, lack of professionalism -- so they are finding their reggae elsewhere.

I have seen ads in the newspapers for a nationwide "Vintage Record Spinners' Competition" sponsored by Desnoes and Geddes brewery. I go to a hall in the Half Way Tree area of central Kingston to find older men from villages all over Jamaica competing over who had the hardest-to-find tunes on antique 78s and 45s -- not Jamaican records but American rhythm and blues. My friend Jerry Small, a photojournalist in his 50s, tells me that migrant farm workers from Jamaica often brought back phonograph records, record players and reel-to-reel tape recorders from the United States when they were paid at the end of the season. He says it was common for returning farm workers who owned American records and phono equipment to provide entertainment at parties and bars around Jamaica. "John brings his records and record player down to the rum shop on Friday night and he gets to drink for free," says Small, who as a youth

went into business with his brothers running “a little sound system that was in steady demand.” Out of this homegrown practice grew the Jamaican sound system as we know it today, as well as a taste for imported rather than locally produced entertainment.

A new nightclub has opened in Sovereign Shopping Center, a few miles from the UWI campus. I go there with my friend Sharon Burke, manager of two performers who will be appearing: dancehall singer Tanya Stephens and a singing and dancing prodigy named Ambilique (who is extremely polite, addressing Sharon as “Ms. Burke” and me as “Sir”). The crowd is well-dressed, well-behaved, cellphone-toting, middle-class through and through. The singers perform reggae with a live band and receive a good but not overwhelming reception. Dancers flood the dance floor when the disc jockey resumes the flow of recorded North American R&B and hip-hop.

“Nuh reggae ‘pon mi radio.” For a few years after the debut of Irie-FM in the early 1990s, you could hear Jamaican music on the radio pretty much 24 hours a day, with Sundays reserved for oldies. But then demographic targeting took over. The listeners that advertisers wanted to reach -- married middle-class women in the suburbs -- liked smooth U.S. rhythm and blues, not reggae and definitely not hardcore dancehall. Aside from a few big hits by artists like Beenie Man, and aside from specialty shows hosted by the likes of dub poet Mutabaruka or veteran radio personality Barry G, even Irie-FM isn’t playing that much Jamaican music right now. Also, talk shows and paid religious programming take up a lot of airtime. Jamaican radio has come full circle since the ‘80s, when locally produced music was only heard after midnight.

The sound systems are completely dormant this summer -- the radio is usually full of ads for sound system dances and sound clashes, but this year there are none. Sound system events are a uniquely Jamaican form of entertainment and I look forward to them each time I make the trip. Kilimanjaro, Stone Love, Inner City, African Star, Metro Media -- the “sounds” are to Jamaica what the samba schools are to Brazil, outlets not only for creative self-expression but also for entrepreneurship in a community that has little opportunity for either. “It’s a class struggle, in that it’s a political situation,” says Louise Frazer-Bennett, head of the sound system owners’ association, who says the government is cracking down on sound systems for noise violations while protecting the equally noisy soca carnival (which appeals to wealthier Jamaicans). She confirms what I have been thinking about the shift in radio airplay from dancehall to softer North American sounds. “There is no airplay, no dances, the music cannot survive in its own country!”

(10.2) The Failure of State Intervention

Broadcast privatization (both inside and outside Jamaica) is only one of several areas where state intervention in the cultural sphere has had unexpected, and generally negative, consequences for reggae. Because of the lack of crossover hits in recent years, reggae in 2000 is receiving probably the least exposure through mainstream media that it has received at any time since

the early 1970s. Few reggae artists, Jamaican or non-Jamaican, seem to be able to access industrial globalization channels such as MTV or major record companies. This particularly highlights the need for dissemination and promotion of music through grassroots networks such as Reggae Ambassadors Worldwide if reggae is to remain musically viable in the global arena.

In the United States at least, broadcast privatization has had the net result of sharply reducing airplay opportunities for reggae. An undeniable effect of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 has been greater concentration of ownership in both radio and television, which in turn has led to tighter formatting and less room for reggae tunes unless they are crossover hits. At the same time, non-commercial public or community radio stations -- which have provided a home for reggae, calypso, folk, bluegrass, and other non-mainstream musics -- faces severe financial pressure as funding sources dry up. Many non-commercial stations are gradually turning away from specialized programming and attempting to draw wider audiences with classical music or jazz.

In Jamaica, privatization of state-run radio channels resulted at first in significantly more airplay for Jamaican music of all styles, from hard-core dancehall riddims to classics from the 1950s. However, as I mentioned in the previous section, commercial pressures have prompted even the newest stations, Irie-FM and CD-106, to soften their sound and add North American R&B and pop to the local dancehall favorites. Roots reggae is almost never heard on the radio in Jamaica; Burning Spear's Grammy-winning album Calling Rastafari received little or no airplay in Jamaica during 1999. "Radio, the medium normally used to promote potential hits and new music, again came under the microscope, with most of its detractors criticizing radio stations for not offering more diverse reggae," wrote Jamaica Observer arts editor Howard Campbell (1997).

Meanwhile, the 1996 sale of the state-run Jamaica Broadcasting Co. to the for-profit Radio Jamaica Rediffusion appears to have left a gap in public service programming, including Jamaican music. Although the JBC programmed little reggae per se, their cultural programming showcased Jamaican talent through documentaries, radio dramas and other forms of programming not usually offered by commercially driven radio. The "new" JBC is tightly formatted and features a mix of Jamaican and North American dance-oriented pop. Jamaican television airs reggae videos and special cultural programming, but is dominated by North American imports and offers little support for reggae.

In copyright and piracy enforcement, Jamaica appears to lag behind world standards. Only in 1998 were procedures finally implemented for copyright owners to file lawsuits for infringement through the Jamaican Supreme Court. One of the first to file writs was Studio One owner Clement "Coxsone" Dodd, whose classic rhythm tracks have been copied endlessly both with and without permission. In May 1999, Dodd sued three of Kingston's biggest producers (Donovan Germaine of Penthouse, Bobby Digital of Digital B, and Fattis Burrell of Xterminator) in Jamaican courts and simultaneously filed writs in British courts against three London-based labels (Jamaica Gold, Peckings, and Sprint Records) for unauthorized use of Studio One material (Dodd, 1999).

Piracy, which would be a fairly easy activity to combat at the local level, continues to run rampant. Many tourist shops still sell cassette copies of the current hit parade, and many tourists still buy them. As Kingston copyright lawyer Milton Samuda points out, everyone knows who the pirates are and no one does anything to stop them. Since Jamaica remains on the wrong side of the digital-analog divide -- records and cassettes are in far wider circulation than CDs or DVDs -- technological methods to combat piracy, such as digital watermarking and Macrovision copy protection, are not applicable. This is also true for key reggae markets such as Africa, India and Latin America, where piracy is a significant distribution channel for reggae, albeit a channel that returns no compensation to the music's creators.

The most direct attempt at state intervention in the Jamaican music industry was the short-lived "Sounds of Jamaica" marketing initiative of the economic development agency Jampro (1996). This effort included a January 1997 trip by a large delegation of performers, producers and government officials to Midem, the international trade show of the music industry held in Cannes. Although the Midem initiative included crowd-pleasing performances by more than 20 reggae artists, there were few tangible results. As a Jamaican friend somewhat cynically put it, some government officials got to take the trip of a lifetime, the taxpayers got the bill, and then things went back to normal. Jampro made only token appearances at Midem in 1998 and 1999.

Four years later, Jamaican state policy toward its own music industry remains contradictory. Although reggae brings many tourists to Jamaica, little is done to identify this steady market and develop attractions for music tourism. Enterprising visitors -- particularly the indomitable Japanese -- do manage to find the clubs, recording studios and dances on their own, but an opportunity for package tours is being missed. There are few venues for live shows, and they are used infrequently. There is dog-eat dog competition among music festivals in Montego Bay and Kingston, which are supported by the tourist board. To attract the big crowds, promoters are adding more and more North American rap, pop, and R&B performers. Tourism officials appear more interested in bringing jazz and soul festivals to the country than in developing attractions that feature homegrown talent. The government promotes imported soca while cracking down on sound systems that feature local dancehall favorites.

The Jampro marketing study identified significant strengths of the Jamaican music industry as well as many weaknesses and threats. In hindsight, Jampro's list of opportunities reads like an exercise in wishful thinking: increase Jamaica's use as a location for movies, commercials and music videos; create linkages with cultural tourism, sports and multimedia. In the four years since the marketing campaign was unveiled, few of these opportunities have been realized. The only entertainment-related developments in Jamaica that have been consistently successful have been those financed privately (in many cases by Bob Marley's heirs and/or his mentor, Chris Blackwell) and with a minimum of state involvement. I will discuss Marley's legacy in the next section.

(10.3) Bob Marley's Legacy

Bob Marley is one of a handful of artists in popular music (his contemporary John Lennon is another) who not only died at his peak but left a body of work that has never gone out of fashion and remains creatively and commercially successful. Marley's songs appeal to a wide range of listeners and he is selling more records in 2000, 19 years after his death, than at any time during his life. His greatest-hits collection, Legend, has sold an estimated 15 million copies worldwide (RIAA, 2000) and was identified by the SoundScan database as the most popular back-catalogue item of the 1990s (Weisbard, 2000). His dreadlocked face is perhaps one of the world's most recognizable icons. In a global marketplace where "branding" is everything, Bob Marley™ is a highly visible and desirable brand.

Marley's estate is administered by his widow, Rita Marley, and her co-executor, Island Records founder Chris Blackwell. Besides considerable income from Marley's publishing, performance and mechanical royalties, the estate also runs the Bob Marley Museum and Tuff Gong Records in Kingston, operates a themed attraction in Nine Mile, Bob's birthplace, and markets a staggering array of Bob Marley merchandise through a large Internet and mail-order business. Blackwell and Rita Marley zealously exploit licensing rights to Bob's name and image. Some licensing decisions have been controversial; the Marley estate drew criticism from Bob's teetotaling Rasta fans in 1997 when Marley's song "Jammin'" was licensed to Anheuser Busch for a television spot featuring the animated Budweiser frogs. Earlier that year, the Marley estate had threatened legal action against a Panamanian brewery for using Marley's image on an outdoor sign for De Primera beer. I heard Jamaican musicians joking that summer that the Panamanians just didn't offer enough money.

The most ambitious marketing of Marley's name and image opened in 1999 at the Universal Studios Florida theme park outside Orlando. "Bob Marley -- A Tribute to Freedom" is a restaurant and club that is modeled after 56 Hope Road in Kingston, Marley's former home and site of the Bob Marley Museum. It is on Universal's CityWalk near "Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville," the "NBA Restaurant," and other themed attractions. The venue serves alcohol, shellfish and meat, all of which were shunned by Marley himself in conformity with Rasta dietary restrictions. A writer commented that "Rita Marley and other reggae figures are more interested in capitalizing on Marley's popularity than in representing the issues and concerns of struggling Rastafarians" (Talvi, 1999).

The "branding" of Bob Marley has involved considerable refashioning of Bob's image (easy, now that he is not around to complain). The ganja-smoking revolutionary who once sang that he felt like bombing a church has been replaced by the natural mystic singing sweet love songs like "Satisfy My Soul" and "Three Little Birds." Bob's image handlers are trying to distance him from the rest of the reggae community. According to a newspaper story on the enduring popularity of the Legend compilation, Island Records conducted a survey that "found that the word 'reggae' often had negative connotations, even to people

who liked Marley [so] the word appears only once on the album's back cover, in type so tiny it can't be read without squinting" (Bauder, 1977). Needless to say, ganja spliffs aren't on the menu at the Tribute to Freedom restaurant.

Marley's offspring have used the family name to launch careers in music, movies and sports. Cedella, Sharon, Steven and Ziggy -- Bob's children with Rita -- perform together as the Melody Makers and supervise the day-to-day operation of the family's businesses. The Melody Makers won Grammy awards and toured successfully in the 1990s, but their career gradually appeared to stall in the late '90s as musical differences between Ziggy and Steven became more apparent (on a 1998 tour they traveled in separate buses and used different bass players). In 1999, the Melody Makers were accused of selling out their roots when they recorded the rock-influenced "Spirit of Music" with celebrity producer Don Was. "Scant interest at home in Marley clan," proclaimed a Jamaican newspaper in a crabs-in-a-barrel tone. "The Marley children, who have followed in their father's footsteps, are finding it difficult to make a name for themselves in their homeland ... [they] do not have a mass audience in Jamaica" ("Scant Interest," 1999).

Bob's out-of-wedlock sons Julian, Damian, Ky-Mani and Rohan are thoroughly integrated into Marley family affairs. Julian, Damian, and Ky-Mani are U.S.-based solo artists whose shows are heavy on Bob Marley hits. They tour extensively on the North American and European reggae circuits but, like the Melody Makers, have difficulty gaining airplay or mass popularity in Jamaica. Son Rohan, the only non-musician of his generation, had a brief career in professional football and helps manage the career of his wife, hip-hop singer/songwriter Lauryn Hill. Hill, who was showered with Grammys for "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," has provided a crucial connection for the Marley children to the world of hip-hop.

Royalties generated by Bob Marley songs, records, videos, books, clothing and other merchandise -- in addition to income from the family-run tourist attractions and the Tuff Gong studio/pressing plant -- provide a comfortable living for the Marley clan. But two 1999 projects show that the younger generation of Marleys are using the universal appeal of their father's music to forge new links with the hip-hop community. "Chant Down Babylon" is a Steven Marley-produced CD on which hip-hop artists like MC Lyte, Busta Rhymes, Chuck D, Erykah Badu and Lauryn Hill sing duets with digitally sampled snippets of Bob's own vocals. The CDs release coincided with a "Tribute to Bob Marley" concert in Oracabessa, Jamaica, aired in the U.S. on Turner Broadcasting Network and marketed on video and DVD. The concert featured a few numbers by Marley family members and old favorites Jimmy Cliff and Toots Hibbert, but was dominated by rock and hip-hop artists. Contemporary Jamaican artists who did appear were largely cut out of the broadcast (though their performances are available as bonus tracks on the DVD).

Bob Marley wrote and performed the songs. Chris Blackwell introduced Bob to the "big-time" and guided his career. Rita Marley took care of things, at home and on the road, and raised Bob's children. After Marley's death in 1981 (and after protracted legal battles), the widow and the record mogul took Bob's

legacy of words, music, image, and built it into an entertainment empire. In Jamaica, which after all is a small and rather poor country of two million people, Chris Blackwell, Rita Marley and Bob's children are regarded with jealousy.

Where Bob is still esteemed as a prophet and down-to-earth man of the people, Rita Marley and Blackwell are frequent targets of scurrilous gossip. Mrs. Marley is described in anecdotes as a controlling and vindictive woman with extravagant tastes, Imelda Marcos-like. Blackwell (who was portrayed on a Lee "Scratch" Perry record sleeve as a blood-sipping vampire) is said to be a bisexual Dorian Gray who practices black magic to stay young. Allegations such as these appear frequently in the Usenet newsgroup "rec.music.reggae" and are discussed in the various Marley biographies (e.g. Davis, 1985; White, 1988; Taylor, 1993).

However, as the Jamaican music industry struggles to survive in a global market and as the Jamaican government struggles to solve chronic economic problems, Bob Marley's legacy is a stabilizing cultural and economic force. The Marley family's various enterprises bring international attention as well as tourist revenue to Jamaica. Palm Pictures, the company Blackwell founded after selling Island Records in 1990, has emerged as one of the first truly diversified multimedia companies of the information age. Its two Jamaican-produced films, Dancehall Queen and Third World Cop, have reincarnated a dormant Jamaican movie industry while its record label is home to a hand-picked roster of reggae and non-reggae artists. Blackwell has also bankrolled projects by Jamaican producers, such as Sly Dunbar's acquisition of Mixing Lab studio. In this respect, Marley lives on in much more than song.

(10.4) Reggae and the Erasure of Memory

The idea that memories can be altered or erased was once the province of UFOlogists, hypnotists and conspiracy theorists. Since the early 1990s, the concept has been employed in a different context by a Los Angeles-based school of critical urban theorists including Mike Davis (1990, 1998), Allen Scott and Edward Soja (1996) and Norman M. Klein (1997), who uses the phrase "erasure of memory" in the title of a book. These theorists discuss the politics of urban redevelopment in post-industrial Los Angeles and document the distortions of historical record that are used to whitewash racial, economic and class conflict (important themes likewise in contemporary movies and fiction about L.A., from Roman Polanski's Chinatown to the novels of James Ellroy, Walter Mosley and John Shannon).

Davis calls attention to the role of mass media in spreading contradictory myths about Los Angeles -- sunny paradise, glamorous movie capital, corrupt Babylon, futuristic dystopia. Klein describes Los Angeles as "a city that was imagined long before it was built" (p. 27) and "the most photographed and least remembered city in the world" (p. 247). He argues that generations of boosterism have created an idealized image of the city that is more believable, even to its own residents, than the unvarnished reality. "The overall effect resembles what psychologists call 'distraction,' where one false memory allows another memory

to be removed in plain view, without complaint -- forgotten" (p. 2), Klein writes, describing demolished landmarks and neighborhoods as "phantom limbs" that sometimes ache with recollection although they no longer exist.

The social construction of collective memory has been widely discussed by theorists in a number of disciplines. The British sociologist Ruth Finnegan (1992) writes that social researchers are "moving away from the idea of storing verbatim memories to one of people reconstructing and organizing on the basis of what they know and do, so that remembering means not drawing on rote memory but a creative and organizational activity by the user" (p. 115). The journal History and Theory devotes an entire issue (Shapiro, 1997) to exploring the relationship between memory and history in a culture where mass-mediated representations are given more credibility than official accounts of events such as the Holocaust or the Kennedy assassination. Of course, false consciousness is not a new concept; the idea that media representations are used to naturalize and legitimate capitalism is a central tenet of Marxism.

The erasure of memory with respect to reggae music is well illustrated by liner notes to a recent compilation of non-Jamaican reggae (Wendt, 1998). Note how the author, a well-known North American critic and radio host, symbolically eradicates the generations of Jamaican music that preceded Bob Marley's career:

It was a quarter century ago that reggae music burst forth from the Caribbean island of Jamaica, fully formed and ready to conquer the world. Through the simultaneous release of Bob Marley and the Wailers' Catch a Fire and the classic film The Harder They Come, starring Jimmy Cliff, reggae found an international audience for the first time. ... Inspired by 60s soul and protest music as well as Jamaican independence, reggae kept the best instincts of the 60s alive with songs of love and social revolution. ... It is of little wonder that reggae has joined rock 'n' roll as one of the most pervasive, popular musics of our time.

The statement erases the history of Jamaican popular music before 1973 -- including mento, ska, rocksteady and early reggae -- both by claiming that Bob Marley and Jimmy Cliff invented reggae and by implying that Island Records owner Chris Blackwell, like Columbus, merely "discovered" it. As I wrote in chapter 2, these myths are perpetuated by most of the mass-market books about reggae (as well as some of the academic works), which give the lion's share of coverage to artists affiliated with Island Records and its descendants.

Reggae is globally significant not because of the works (or sales figures) of any one artist, but because it has so widely influenced recording studio practices and spawned so many other musical forms such as rap, hip-hop, house, techno, jungle, drum-n-bass and other variations. The use of the recording studio as a musical instrument, for "sonic painting" rather than accuracy of reproduction, was pioneered by Jamaicans in the mid-60s when the Beatles' innovations were still a few years away. The idea that a phonograph record could be more than a product for mass consumption -- that it could be the

backing track for many different “versions” -- can be attributed to Jamaican sound system operators. So can the idea that you don't need to play a musical instrument to put on a show as long as you have turntables, amps and speakers -- the idea that a Jamaican immigrant, Kool Herc, introduced to kids in Bronx, N.Y., playgrounds in the late '60s. The result was hip-hop -- which has since evolved into one of the top musical genres in the world in sales popularity.

To be fair, hip-hop artists often speak of their indebtedness to reggae, and some, like KRS-One, Grandmaster Flash and Busta Rhymes, proclaim Caribbean roots. But it is safe to venture that the vast record-buying public has no idea that reggae existed before Bob Marley and thinks of hip-hop as something separate, an African-American invention. The erasure of memory is also at work in academic cultural studies; Tricia Rose (1994), for example, articulates a theory of rap as a fusion of African-American oral practices and postmodern technologies. She makes no reference to the fact that this fusion first occurred in Jamaica and was imported into the U.S. (Caribbean music and reggae are mentioned only in footnotes). Books and music magazines likewise ignore Jamaica's significant contribution to other popular musics.

In 1993 and again in 1997, Jamaican producer Gussie Clarke said that crossovers between reggae and North American hip-hop worried him because he was afraid reggae would be swallowed up, would lose its distinctiveness, would be -- in a word -- erased. The same thought occurred to Kevin Chang and Wayne Chen (1998) in their “revisionist” history of reggae:

In 10 or 20 years' time, although rap may have originally evolved from dancehall, given rap's far larger market, artist population base and media exposure, it's hard not to see dancehall eventually being devoured by its offspring, becoming just another branch of the rap tree, differing from hip hop in a way as say East Coast rap differs from West Coast rap.

Elsewhere in their book, Chang and Chen (who are partial to oldies and slick “uptown” artists like Byron Lee) have little use for dancehall, calling it monotonous and unoriginal and criticizing its tendency toward misogyny. However, it is difficult to argue with their claim that the advent of Black Entertainment Television (available in Jamaica on satellite and cable since about 1992), among other factors, is contributing to the gradual absorption of Jamaican reggae into a globalized version of hip-hop.

The prominent American music critic Nelson George (1988, 1998) writes that the “death” (as he puts it) of black popular music in the United States began in the 1950s, when white artists began playing a deracinated version of rhythm & blues and christened it rock & roll “to camouflage its black roots” (p. x). George argues that this pushed black music back into African-American communities, where it would emerge again as soul, disco, funk, or rap, become popular, be marketed to the infinitely larger white audience in diluted “crossover” form. To George, the “death” of rhythm & blues as a force uniting African-Americans happened because of too much cultural crossover:

[I]t is clear that black America's assimilationist obsession is heading it straight toward cultural suicide. The challenge facing black artists, producers, radio programmers and entrepreneurs of every description is to free themselves from the comforts of crossover, to recapture their racial identity, and to fight for the right to exist on their own terms (p. 200).

The erasure of memory with respect to black music can be stated in more overtly theoretical terms: "[T]he subordinate group's ability to express and represent its authentic experience is negated. ... Thus, the subordinate group comes to experience the world in the codes of the dominant group" (Grossberg, Wartella, & Whitney, 1998, p. 190). However, in the case of reggae, the issue is clouded because the dominant group (North American rap producers and labels) and the subordinate group (reggae artists) share a common cultural ancestry and can both be termed subordinate groups within the dominant mainstream of global popular culture.

(10.5) Global and Local Reggae: Divergent Paths?

"Carry mi ackee go a Linstead Market," goes a famous folk song learned by generations of Jamaican schoolchildren. "Not a quattie wort' sell." It's the lament of a poor country woman who has brought her perishable crop a long distance to market, only to find no one buying. Ackee, a fruit with a taste and texture like scrambled eggs, is a Jamaican staple; a quattie is a quarter of a sixpence, very small change indeed. "Oh, what a life, not a bite! What a Saturday night!" the woman wails. People want to handle the merchandise, but her pockets are empty. "Everybody come squeeze up, squeeze up, not a quattie wort' sell."

"Linstead Market" -- either the song or the actual place in the hills north of Kingston -- provides a metaphor for the global political economy of information/communication and the position of intercultural reggae within it. In the country market, sellers bring their goods from home and place them on display in predetermined areas. They take the risk because there is predictable demand for their goods -- after all, everyone has to eat -- and they know the preferences of their regular customers because most are from the immediate vicinity. Everyone is selling more or less the same things at more or less the same prices, so there is fierce competition for every advantage. Business success has much more to do with the market power of the seller than with the quality of the merchandise. Sellers compete for favorable locations on the basis of seniority, and high-traffic spots are defended zealously. Some sellers use friends and relatives as skills, on the theory that people equate a busy stall with quality merchandise. Others appear helpful and friendly, trying to ingratiate themselves to potential buyers. Some employ particularly creative, or particularly aggressive, sales pitches. But try as they might, they can't force passersby to spend money, and sometimes they go home empty-handed.

Since the early 1990s, reggae has developed a split personality, a dichotomy of "dancehall" and "roots" musics appealing to largely different audiences. There appears to be little interest among contemporary Jamaicans in

roots reggae, which ironically is seen by many as “foreign” or “international” music dominated by rock-style guitar and appealing mainly to whites. As non-Jamaican artists have begun to dominate roots reggae, popular interest in Jamaica has shifted to a mix of North American hip-hop and hard-core dancehall. In the inner-city communities of Kingston and Montego Bay, where sound systems rather than radio stations set the tone, dancehall is the only Jamaican music.

“The fact that the white controlled the purse strings usually meant that the true black form was forced underground and some less vibrant usurper came to hold sway,” writes Jamaican musicologist Garth White (1980). “Not satisfied with this, the whites, shouldering their ‘burden,’ often took over those watered down forms under the pretext of polishing them up, pushing the black practitioners out of the picture.” White’s essentialism aside, his statement suggests that the current dominance of dancehall in Jamaica is a form of local backlash against the globalization of reggae.

Although dancehall has many fans outside Jamaica, they tend to be confined to large urban areas where the music has gained popularity through play at clubs and dances. Elsewhere, roots reggae (e.g. Bunny Wailer, Culture, Burning Spear) and pop/reggae (e.g. Ziggy Marley, Steel Pulse) continue to draw the biggest crowds and sell the most records. Many non-Jamaican reggae fans dislike the sound and attitude of dancehall just as vehemently as U.S. soul and funk fans dislike rap. Take for an example this statement by a North American reggae show on its music policy: “Music on this show is ‘roots reggae’ only. No rap, no hip-hop. Dancehall style will be aired only if it has a clear reggae beat” (RAW, 1999c). Likewise, performers at Reggae Ambassadors Worldwide conferences have been almost universally “roots reggae,” with a preference for socially conscious performers in the Rastafarian tradition.

Thus, Jamaica finds itself in the position of the woman in “Linstead Market,” growing a crop and laboriously conveying it to market only to find few buyers. There is considerable interest in Jamaican music around the world (“everybody come squeeze up”), but no one makes a lasting commitment. All the talk of a slump in the Jamaican music business boils down to this: Jamaica is producing an endless supply of music, but not the kind that the global audience wants, so the demand for roots reggae is being satisfied elsewhere. Meanwhile, the global audience remains largely ignorant of dancehall, the music that is so popular in Jamaica, because multinational media corporations refuse to invest their resources in what they see as a mere novelty, rap with a Caribbean accent. One reason why there is no “new Bob Marley” is that there is no “new Chris Blackwell” investing in long-term artist development.

Anxiety and celebration, the intertwined narrative tropes about world music described by Steven Feld (1999), can be found in profusion in the ethnographic text: many participants optimistically claim that reggae will take over the world, but (almost in the same breath) worry about the seeming lack of major-label interest in the music. “[O]ne frequently encounters a critically suspicious stance on the workings and motivations of the music industry mixed with a critically sympathetic stance on the aspirations and activities of musicians

and publics" (1999, p. 1), Feld writes. Instead, I will return to the dictum that I heard so many times in Jamaica, that there are "no facts, only versions" -- in this case, a "global version" and "local version" of intercultural reggae.

Global version. Reggae has become the universal music of justice and social awareness. It is appreciated and performed everywhere in the world, and its meanings are understood by people in a broader range of cultural settings than any other popular music of the time. Through its practices of versioning, mixing and dubbing, it has exerted a strong influence on other musical forms and has given birth to entire genres -- hip-hop, rap, techno, house, trance, jungle, and the many other variations of technological dance music would be unthinkable had not reggae paved the way. Reggae has produced a truly iconic figure, Bob Marley, whose words and music continue to inspire idealists and revolutionaries the world over. Through Reggae Ambassadors Worldwide and other communication networks, reggae is able to mobilize people and resources for grassroots movements on a global scale. For an unassuming ghetto music that was scorned in its homeland for many years, reggae has come far.

Local version. Like the first generation of African-American bluesmen and women, the originators of reggae have sat on the sidelines and watched while others profit from their creativity. A laid-back, informal culture of doing business has left Jamaica ripe for exploitation, while the individualistic nature of the business has led to many suspicions and jealousies that stand in the way of collective action. The government continues to fight both sides of the battle, cracking down on sound system operators who disseminate the kind of music loved by everyday Jamaicans while spending public resources promoting tourist events featuring every other kind of music under the sun: rap, soul, jazz, gospel, steel band or soca. It is no wonder that Jamaicans have developed something of a split personality about this. Significantly, the best produced album to come out of Jamaica in 1999 -- From East Memphis to Kingston on Bob Marley's own label, Tuff Gong -- is an album of brilliantly performed covers of North American soul hits. In a way, Jamaican music has come full circle, playing cover versions and sanitized "island favorites" for the entertainment of tourists.

It is difficult to predict whether these tensions can be resolved. Perhaps reggae has already evolved too far toward a globalized musical style to ever re-connect with its Caribbean roots. Nevertheless, the values espoused by reggae practitioners are much needed in this conflict-ridden world, and their modest successes in spreading the message of reggae to every corner of the world gives hope that global reggae can prevail.

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**The Political Economy of Pop:
A Non-Reductionist Approach**

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The production, distribution and consumption of recorded popular music encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from home-brewed CDs and tapes by local DJs and garage bands to heavily promoted mega-hits by Britney Spears, Metallica, Kid Rock, Destiny's Child and other acts signed to the major labels that control 85 percent of the global music market. Yet the discussion of popular music in academic and trade publications continues to be dominated by reductionist binaries ("majors versus indies," "rock versus pop," and "art versus commerce" are three of the most enduring) that obscure the shifting dynamics of economic activity in pop music.

While production technology has become cheap and accessible since the 1980s, access to distribution networks tightened during the 1990s because of the oligopolistic practices of major labels. During 2000 and 2001, digital technologies and the alternative distribution channel of the Internet emerged to threaten major-label control of music distribution. The aggressive legal campaign by major labels against file-sharing services such as MP3.com and Napster suggests that the phonogram industry is now more than ever attempting to structure music consumption, primarily by seeking state intervention limiting consumer access to new digital technologies.

In communication studies, a low-intensity conflict has existed for years between structuralists (who focus almost entirely on the production context and emphasize the ways in which capitalist ideology pervades mass media) and culturalists (who focus almost entirely on consumption and the idiosyncratic ways in which members of the audience use media content in identity-building). The linkages between production and consumption have been insufficiently theorized. In this paper, I offer a conceptual framework that permits closer exploration of the dialectics of control in popular music. Production, distribution and consumption are viewed as separate but interpenetrated phases of activity, each with its own distinctive technologies, appropriate

relationships, and ideologies. In the final section, I apply the model to the globalized music industry of the early 21st century.

Description of Recorded Music Industry

Worldwide phonogram sales in 2000 were estimated at US\$36.9 billion by the International Federation of Phonogram Industries, a trade association (IFPI, 2001). This represents a decrease in sales of \$1.1 billion since the banner year of 1999. The IFPI attributes the slump in sales to piracy and Internet file sharing.

The industry is dominated by five transnational corporations based in Europe, Japan and the United States: Universal Music Group, Bertelsmann Music Group, Warner-Elektra-Atlantic, Sony Music, and EMI Music Distributing. The U.S. is by far the world's largest music market, accounting to 38 percent of worldwide sales or nearly twice the retail sales of second-place Japan. Rankings in the U.S. market based on market share are:

1. Universal -- (Eminem, Dr. Dre, Limp Bizkit, Weezer) -- 24.6%
2. BMG -- (Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears, Santana) -- 19.3%
3. Time Warner -- (Faith Hill, Kid Rock, Madonna) -- 17.3%
4. Sony -- (Destiny's Child, Macy Gray, Bruce Springsteen) -- 16.1%
5. All independent labels -- (Baha Men, Nickel Creek, Slipknot) -- 14.5%
6. EMI -- (Beatles, Garth Brooks, Janet Jackson) -- 8.4%

The industry is both horizontally and vertically integrated. All of the "Big Five" music corporations are divisions of highly diversified corporations with interests in entertainment, motion pictures, publishing, broadcasting/cable, information technology, consumer electronics, theme parks, and even alcohol distilling. Thus, they are able to market products synergistically and achieve a high level of market saturation. Major labels can finance, record, master, manufacture, distribute, promote, retail, and collect profits on a phonogram without outside assistance. Horizontal and vertical integration gives the dominant corporations a substantial competitive edge over independent productions.

The popular music industry can be characterized as an oligopoly, generally defined as a situation where four or five firms control more than 60 percent of sales in an industry, with recognized interdependence among firms, homogeneity of products, little price competition and substantial barriers to entry by new competitors. Oligopolies tend to be predatory and may sacrifice profit for a gain in market share. Collusion over pricing is necessary because "the combined profits of the entire set of firms in an industry are maximized when they act together as a monopolist" (Stigler, 1975). The ultimate goal is to force competitors out of business and monopolize the market; however, state intervention has generally prevented this.

In the case of popular music, five firms control more than 80 percent of worldwide sales. There is interdependence among firms in the form of trade associations such as IFPI and the Recording Industry Association of America, which speak for the entire industry in addressing issues such as piracy, and which coordinate legal actions against alleged infringers. Products are necessarily standardized, prices

vary little among manufacturers, and access to technologies and distribution networks (along with substantial economies of scale) serve as barriers to entry for potential competitors. Similar oligopolies can be observed in the airline, steel and semiconductor industries.

Despite their size, the transnationals' inability to predict or control consumer behavior has given the industry a cyclical, boom-or-bust character. Music is not a necessity and its consumption is affected by larger economic factors that are out of the control of phonogram manufacturers. Although independent labels arise periodically to capitalize upon new musical trends that are being ignored by the majors (disco and punk are good examples), they tend to be quickly bought out and incorporated into the transnational conglomerates. Keith Negus (1992, 1999) and Stephen Lee (1995) are two authors who have attempted to debunk the myth of creative "indies" and corporate "majors" by revealing the ruthlessness with which dominant corporations force competitors to their knees and buy them out at fire-sale prices.

It is clear that distribution is a key area in which the "Big Five" transnationals maintain their oligopolistic control of the popular music market. Major labels cannot control what music people will make or what music people will like. However, they can structure consumer choices to some extent by controlling the flow of product to the public. As we will see later, they also attempt to structure popular music consumption in other ways -- often with considerable help from legislative bodies and state regulators.

A Non-Reductionist Approach

In this section, I will outline a non-reductionist approach that can provide a more sophisticated understanding of the political economy of popular music. I draw primarily on the work of Nicholas Garnham (1985), Graham Murdock (1989), Peter Shields and Rohan Samarajiva (1993) and Nicos Mouzelis (1990).

Garnham, discussing mediated communication in general, writes that consumptive practices can provide significant insights into the dynamics of media industries, but are frequently overlooked by media analysts. Although something of an economic determinist, Garnham argues that the economic sphere of media activity should be separated for analytical purposes into phases of production, distribution and consumption.

Murdock, likewise, argues that the capitalist mode of economic production should be regarded as a "necessary starting point for analysis but not a destination" (p. 229). He argues that analysis of economic activity within the cultural industries must take into account the structuring of consumer choices by industry, as well as attempts by consumers (including those involved in music-making) to resist top-down domination by large media institutions. Murdock further maintains that the links between economic and symbolic activity are highly complex, and can be obscured by a definition of economic determination

Shields and Samarajiva, drawing on James Beniger's (1986) concept of communication technologies as forms of social control, suggest that access to

technology is a key area of struggle between the cultural industries and the public in which state intervention (on the side of industry) is frequently sought. They argue that “struggle within the economic sphere need not be limited to the capital-labor and capital-capital relations in the production phase” (p. 375) and that “relations of distribution and relations of consumption involve struggle between capital and consumers” (p. 376).

With respect to popular music, the phase of production is relatively free from top-down control by dominant corporations. Anyone can record and manufacture phonograms at relatively low cost, but cannot necessarily gain access to markets or garner promotional exposure. The phase of distribution is tightly controlled by the major-label oligopoly (aided and abetted by lax enforcement of antitrust laws). The phase of consumption is the primary area of conflict between industry desires for market domination and consumer desires for autonomy. Thus, as Shields and Samarajiva suggest, it is the phase in which state intervention has been most common. Campaigns against Internet distribution of music, retail sale of used CDs and “bootlegging” exemplify the desire of the oligopoly to set limits on consumer autonomy through the invocation of state power.

The analytical framework can be enhanced by drawing on the work of Mouzelis, who offers what he terms a post-Marxist alternative for open-ended investigation of social phenomena. Mouzelis contends this task is impossible within a Marxist framework, given Marxism’s privileging of the economic base as the sole determinant of political and cultural activities. Instead, he postulates that

[h]uman beings do more than merely produce economic goods for their physical survival. They also produce, with the help of specific tools and technologies, the political order that makes organized life in complex societies possible; as well as the cultural order that enables them to relate meaningfully to each other and to the non-human worlds surrounding them. Each major sphere of production -- whether economic, political or cultural -- implies specific technologies and the appropriation of these technologies; it also implies specific ideologies with the help of which those who profit most from the prevailing control and appropriation arrangements try to justify the status quo” (p. 48, emphasis mine).

The music industry is located in the cultural sphere, significantly interpenetrated by the economic sphere (record companies are profit-driven enterprises that generate billions of dollars in revenues) and the political sphere (there is state intervention over issues such as piracy, copyright enforcement, song lyrics, home taping, etc.).

In summary, this conceptual model views production, distribution, and consumption as separate phases of economic activity in popular music, each with its own distinct technologies (forces of production), appropriative relationships (relations of production), and ideologies (communicative practices that legitimate the inequality between dominant and dominated groups). There are hidden as well as visible articulations among the three phases, and all are subject to some degree of state intervention.

Analysis of Popular Music Industry

In this section, I will apply the conceptual model I have developed above to an analysis of the globalized popular music industry of the early 21st century. I will discuss in turn the phases of production, distribution and consumption in terms of their typical technologies, appropriative relationships, and ideological practices.

Production

Production has traditionally been one area of the music industry most open to individual entrepreneurship. Elvis Presley, one of the most prominent stars of our era, cut his first records at independent producer Sam Phillips' Sun Records in Memphis, Tenn., at a time when larger studios were equipped solely for big-band and orchestral recordings under the supervision of staff producers from major labels. Also, replication services for small production runs have been readily available for many years. The advent of low-cost recording and replication technologies in the 1980s have, if anything, made this phase more accessible to independent producers and musicians.

Technologies. The means of musical production include not only hardware (musical instruments, recording and sound reinforcement systems, mastering labs and replication plants) but also institutions (management and booking agencies, phonogram companies, performing rights organizations, etc.) and content (particular songs, styles, arrangements and musical genres). Expertise in musical performance and production can also be considered a "technology" in the Mouzelian sense. Production of popular music is an area in which substantial linkages with the phase of consumption may be observed, since musicians are also consumers of both recorded music and musical equipment.

The rapid development of microprocessors since the early 1980s has resulted in widespread availability of musical instruments and recording equipment through local music stores as well as large mail-order chains. In highly developed regions such as North America, Japan and Europe, the vast majority of working musicians either own or have access to some form of multi-track recording and mixing technology. Paul Théberge (1997) argues that the marketing of user-friendly sound technologies by multinational corporations such as Roland and Yamaha has blurred the boundary between production and consumption by giving musicians access to prerecorded sounds and prefabricated rhythmic patterns, creating a relationship of mutual dependency between musicians and technology manufacturers that is deeply embedded in consumer capitalism.

Obviously, the low cost of equipping a "home" or "project" studio appeals to local bands, new artists and producers on limited budgets. The majority of established artists, with proven sales records, still opt for the prestige, state-of-the-art technology and technical expertise of large studios, where hourly rates can easily run in excess of \$500, and one could argue that there is a built-in prejudice at major labels for recordings made at prestigious studios such as Sunset Sound in Los Angeles or the Hit Factory in New York. Richard Middleton (1990) suggests that major labels have encouraged the growth of small studios, since they serve as a risk-free source of new talent and provide market surveillance for record companies of local music scenes.

Correspondingly, the shift from vinyl records to digital compact disks has resulted in the proliferation of small replication plants throughout highly developed countries. In the United States and Canada, manufacturing capacity appears to have outpaced demand, and replication plants have been both cutting prices and accepting orders for smaller production runs. The back pages of magazines such as Musician, Mix, and Recording typically contain advertisements from dozens of replication facilities offering low rates for quantities of CDs as small as 100.

Appropriation. Although technologies for production and manufacturing are more widely available to independent artists and labels now than in the past, the system of phonogram financing clearly favors artists affiliated with major labels. These artists typically receive advances on future royalties in order to pay production costs. Although advances typically must be paid back before the artist begins earning royalties -- shifting much of the risk from record company to artist -- they do provide a means of up-front financing that is not available to independent artists.

While it is impossible to generalize, artists under contract to major labels are able to spend more time in costlier studios with higher-paid technical personnel than their typically poorer independent counterparts. This appropriative relationship has led to the emergence of a class of celebrity engineer/producers such as Bob Clearmountain, Hugh Padgham, Robert "Mutt" Lange, Todd Rundgren and others who are able to command large fees for their services because of their skills and name recognition. Only in rare instances are these technical personnel available to artists on limited budgets.

The "Big Five" transnationals, with their in-house replication facilities and high sales volume, also enjoy economies of scale in phonogram manufacturing that are not available to smaller companies. Although trade publications advertise replication services charging as little as \$2.00 per CD in small quantities, major labels can produce multimillion-selling CDs for pennies. This both increases the profitability of top-selling hits while minimizing losses from flops.

Ideology. Since recording and manufacturing technologies are so widely available, the boundary between "amateur" and "professional" music production must be maintained discursively. This is done in a number of ways.

First, record companies present themselves as close-to-the-ground operations that continuously monitor local musical activities in an ongoing effort to discover and market promising new artists. Although they are divisions of huge transnational conglomerates, record labels continue to promote themselves as "hip" and anti-establishment. Consumers are seen as the ultimate arbiters of popular music, "voting with their dollars" in a highly individual and unpredictable manner.

Second, labels employ an ideology of musical talent to justify the highly subjective decisions involved in signing and dropping artists. "Best unsigned band" contests are sponsored annually by magazines and industry groups, with winners invited to perform at industry showcases and given favorable consideration for record contracts. Although few of the current crop of pop stars have ever done so themselves, the ideology of "paying your dues" in local clubs and being "discovered" by talent

scouts for major labels is used to legitimate the appropriative relationships described above.

Distribution

Distribution, in this analysis, entails both delivery of manufactured phonograms to retail markets and stimulation of consumer demand. This phase represents the most significant point of control in the music industry and one in which the impact of horizontal and vertical integration by transnational conglomerates can be seen most clearly. Independent producers can make CDs at low unit cost, but they cannot necessarily get them to market or gain media exposure for them. Since distribution covers a vast area of activity, I will concentrate on the impacts of market concentration and market surveillance.

Technologies. At the beginning of this chapter, I wrote that firms in an oligopoly typically attempt to guarantee maximum profitability by limiting competitive access to retail markets. One way in which major labels have traditionally achieved this is through maintenance of their in-house distribution networks that service retailers and broadcasters. Control over wholesale distribution by the "Big Five" has been dramatically strengthened during the 1990s by their acquisition of "first-tier" independents such as Island, A&M, Motown and Virgin. These companies had well-developed distribution networks of their own, which were assimilated into those of the parent corporations.

Technologies for market surveillance have also affected distribution patterns. SoundScan, a Hartsdale, N.Y., company founded in 1990, tracks point-of-sale data from music retailers and supplies detailed sales information to phonogram companies, broadcasters and trade publications. The company receives revenue both from the estimated 80 percent of retailers (SoundScan, 1999) reporting bar-code data from their cash registers, and from industry organizations that receive weekly sales reports. SoundScan reports, along with self-reported data from radio stations, form the basis for the influential Billboard charts -- which previously were based entirely on self-reported data and were widely seen as inaccurate. Billboard also employs a computerized tracking system for broadcast airplay, Broadcast Data Systems, that tracks airplay of hit songs on selected radio stations in the U.S. and Canada.

SoundScan uses statistical modeling to compensate for under-representation of independent retailers (defined as anyone owning 10 or fewer stores) in its sample. It also permits independent artists to submit indoor concert venue sales, thus permitting them to demonstrate that they are affecting the market in at least a small way. However, the system appears to be most effective at tracking sales of major-label phonograms that are selling heavily through large retail chains, since these large corporations are SoundScan's primary income base.

Secondary music media such as radio and music television can be considered technologies for distribution since they directly or indirectly promote sale of phonograms. In the United States, broadcast deregulation has promoted both increased concentration of ownership (because of a relaxation of chain ownership regulations) and decreased musical diversity (because of tighter formatting and the influence of

national programming consultants). Both of these factors work to the advantage of major labels and established hitmakers. Outside the United States, it is still too early to assess the impact of broadcast privatization, but it appears likely that the pattern will follow the U.S. model.

Appropriation. As I have mentioned above, the net impact of market concentration in popular music has been to place control of distribution into fewer hands. Appropriative relationships within the phase of distribution operate in a noticeably top-down fashion through a number of mechanisms, including strategic alliances between phonogram companies and large retailers, secondary marketing of hit songs in soundtracks and commercials, and major-label dominance of secondary music media.

Since the 1980s, retailing in the United States and other highly developed countries has increasingly been dominated by national/international chains. This is true for general retail stores where phonograms are sold (such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Circuit City, Best Buy, and department stores) as well as for more specialized stores (Musicland, Sam Goody, Tower Records, Barnes & Noble, etc.). The market research firm SoundScan estimates that about 85 percent of phonograms are sold in chains with 10 or more outlets (SoundScan, 1999).

Although many of these stores are permitted discretion in stocking small quantities of phonograms by local artists, the managers of several chain-owned retail stores confirmed that all purchasing decisions are made centrally at corporate headquarters based on profiles generated from past sales. This centralization of purchasing by retailers allows major phonogram companies to concentrate their marketing efforts on fewer individuals, each of whom have greater purchasing power, than ever before.

Licensing of songs for motion picture soundtracks, compilation albums and radio/television commercials is another lucrative market open primarily to major phonogram companies with their large rosters of artists and international marketing reach. Although songs from independent artists/labels are occasionally used in movies -- director Jonathan Demme is particularly known for showcasing little-known musical artists -- these markets are generally only open to established hitmakers such as Elton John, Celine Dion, Steve Winwood or Madonna (whose hit song "Ray of Light" became the theme for an advertising campaign by AT&T while still on the Billboard charts).

Radio and music video are conventionally regarded as serving an important promotional function for phonogram companies: they provide exposure for musical artists and provide market surveillance in the form of playlists, listener requests and other information. While this is no doubt true, the view of media play as purely "promotional" tends to mystify another significant function that falls into the phase of distribution. Media play of popular music is a significant form of revenue for record companies in the form of royalties for song publishing.

Although publishing royalties amount to only a few cents per play, they add up quickly when multiplied by the tens of thousands of broadcast stations worldwide who report and pay copyright fees to performing rights organizations such as ASCAP, BMI,

SESAC, etc. Publishing represents an area where major phonogram companies and wealthy artists have achieved a high degree of control over distribution revenues for popular music. This is illustrated by Sony's 1995 acquisition from Michael Jackson of the ATV Music catalog, which includes 250 Beatles songs as well as compositions by Little Richard and Elvis Presley, for an estimated \$500 million or about 10 times what Jackson paid for it in 1985.

Although distribution and stimulation of market demand encompasses a vast area of activity beyond the scope of this study, it can be inferred from the above evidence that appropriative relations in the phase of distribution are extremely asymmetrical. Distribution is the phase of popular music in which the oligopoly of major labels is most able to restrict competition and attempt to structure audience choices.

Ideology. The asymmetrical power relations that I have described above are legitimated in part by the discourse of musical talent I have described in the previous section, as well as through other means that I will discuss below.

The idea that musical talent is discovered and rewarded with a recording contract leads inevitably to the idea that "national acts" (who have record deals) exhibit a higher level of musical talent than "local bands" (who are still presumably learning their craft). Thus, an artist's status as "signed" or "unsigned" is employed as an implicit measure of quality by record companies, wholesalers, retailers, broadcast programmers and others involved in the distribution phase. In my personal experience as an independent producer, I have been told by both radio program directors and phonogram retailers that independently produced CDs are technically inferior to major-label CDs -- even though they are mastered and pressed to the same IEC Red Book technical standard and are audibly identical to major-label product.

The dominant corporations also legitimate their high degree of control over distribution channels by mystifying the degree of top-down control over the activities of subsidiary labels. We have seen evidence in a previous section that major labels are predatory and frequently buy out smaller labels to increase their market share. The majors, in turn, incorporate the names, goodwill, and "maverick" style of these "captive" independents into their own marketing strategies. The consumer sees a package bearing the name of an "indie" label which carries favorable associations from past experience but does not see the web of corporate relationships and control strategies involved in placing that CD in the store. He or she thinks positively of Sire Records, for example, because it was the label that brought the Pretenders, Talking Heads, and Blondie to national prominence in the 1980s -- while remaining blissfully unaware that Sire in the 1990s is nothing but a captive operating division of Sony Music.

Radio stations and music video channels also help legitimate the appropriative relationships described here by mystifying the degree to which the popularity of songs influences programming decisions. Music video channels solicit little or no feedback from viewers and their programming decisions appear to be made in conjunction with the promotional departments of major record companies. At many radio stations, listener requests are dutifully accepted and then ignored, since the station's playlist is as

often as not fixed by a consultant in a distant city. Although radio stations occasionally play songs by local artists, they receive the bulk of their musical programming free from major labels and appear little inclined to explore other options.

Consumption

I have shown thus far that the phase of production in popular music is characterized by a relatively low level of top-down control by dominant corporations, while the phase of distribution is characterized by a relatively high level of major-label control. The phase of consumption thus becomes the main arena of conflict between industry desires for domination and consumer desires for autonomy. Consumption is an area in which state intervention is often sought, as in country singer Garth Brooks' campaign for legal sanctions against sellers of used CDs and rock band Metallica's campaign in 1999-2000 against Internet music site Napster.

Technologies. There is a long-standing preference in the music industry for "read-only" technologies (phonograph records, conventional CDs) that permit only the playback of prerecorded material, as opposed to "read-write" technologies that permit consumers to make their own recordings. The advent of high-fidelity cassette recorders in the early 1970s marked the beginning of an era of prolonged conflict between record companies and the public that has been characterized by repeated calls for protectionist legislation.

Read-write technologies were the province of hobbyists and professionals for many years. Reel-to-reel tape recorders were common in radio stations and recording studios during the 1950s and 1960s, but failed to catch on with the public because of their bulk and difficulty of operation. The introduction of the first high-quality cassette recorder/players in the early 1970s proved revolutionary, for it permitted ordinary consumers to manipulate popular music in their own idiosyncratic ways. The later development of auto cassette players and personal stereos (such as the prototypical Sony Walkman) extended the consumption of popular music from the home into public space and permitted listening while driving, walking and exercising.

Dominant phonogram companies have regarded each new read/write technology since the cassette as a threat to their profitability. The dual-well "dubbing" cassette deck, the cassette-like digital audio tape or DAT format, and recently the recordable compact disk or CD-R have all been vilified by industry groups such as the RIAA as promoting copyright infringement. Distribution of digital audio files via Internet is the latest consumptive technology to become controversial for the same reason.

Intellectual property laws are technologies of consumption since they structure the ways in which music may be used. Although the making of a single copy of a copyrighted work is permitted in most countries under the doctrine of "fair use," phonogram companies have long contended that home duplication is a considerable source of lost revenue. In the U.S., digital media (DVDs, CDs and computer programs) are specifically exempted from the "doctrine of first sale" (which allows the owner of a legal copy of a copyrighted work to rent it out or sell it, as in the case of video rentals)

because of industry fears of unauthorized copying. Intellectual property rights are also maintained by ideological means, as I will show in the next subsection.

Not only legal but also technological means are employed to structure consumption of popular music. Copy-protection technologies such as the Serial Copy Management System (SCMS) for digital audio and Macrovision for video have become increasingly important tools in industry efforts against copyright infringement. Under the newest copyright convention drafted by the 160-nation World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), adopted in the U.S. in 1998 as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, copy protection is mandatory on all digital audio/video recorders manufactured after April 2000 and the marketing of any anti-copy-protection technology is prohibited.

Finally, broadcasting can be considered a technology of consumption whose content is heavily structured by the output of the dominant phonogram corporations. Broadcast airplay is a significant source of revenue to phonogram companies and artists since it generates royalty payments for “public performances” of songs. The proliferation of “oldies” formats on radio, and the periodic revivals of older forms of music such as ska and swing, ensure the longevity of this revenue stream, which is all but invisible to the phonogram-buying public.

Appropriation. Power relationships in the phase of consumption are extremely unbalanced. A well-organized and well-funded coalition of entertainment companies, music publishers, industry groups and established recording artists has long been able to secure favorable legislation over matters such as piracy and copyright infringement from governmental bodies around the world. Their only significant opposition comes from a de facto alliance of hardware manufacturers -- whose interest lies in providing the newest technologies to consumers -- and small consumer groups such as the Home Recording Rights Coalition. Given the “star power” of the major entertainment conglomerates, it is not surprising that state intervention has almost exclusively occurred on the side of the dominant music corporations, who have won concessions such as special taxes on blank recording media and mandatory copy-protection circuitry.

The copyright scholar Jessica Litman (1996) argues that the rights of the public to see, read, or hear copyrighted material are being rapidly eroded because consumers are excluded from the process by which copyright laws are written. She writes that

[t]he current federal copyright statute (and its predecessors) were composed by representatives of copyright-related industries to govern interactions among them. ... We have never had a mechanism for members of the general public to exert influence on the drafting process to ensure that the statute does not unduly burden private, non-commercial, consumptive use of copyrighted works. The design of the drafting process (in which players with major economic stakes in the copyright sphere are typically invited to sit down and work out their differences before involving members of Congress in any new legislation) excludes ordinary citizens from the negotiating table (p. 2).

The development of digital technologies such as DAT and CD-R has proven particularly threatening to industry groups because of their ability to make bit-perfect copies of digital sound recordings. The evolution of these technologies has been marked by considerable conflict between hardware manufacturers and content providers. Prompted in part by the bitter seven-year legal battle over the introduction of DAT into the U.S. and Europe, the three largest hardware corporations (Sony, Philips and Matsushita) bought into phonogram companies in the late 1980s in hopes of solving such conflicts internally. However, as of 1998, both Matsushita and Philips have sold off their holdings in record companies to concentrate on development of advanced hardware.

Philips has clearly entered into an adversarial relationship with the phonogram industry. Its winter 1998-99 advertising campaign for dual-well compact disk recorders, which appeared only weeks after the Polygram sale, can be seen in this context as a virtual declaration of war on the record industry. Under the heading, "A compilation as unique as you are," we see a young man compiling songs onto a recordable CD and taking it to a dance club, where the disk jockey plays it to the delight of hundreds of clubgoers. The commercial was harshly criticized by the IFPI, RIAA and other industry groups as encouraging consumers to violate copyright laws (Goldsmith, 1998).

While few observers would defend the legitimacy of large-scale piracy for profit, the making of single copies of recordings for private consumption qualifies as "fair use" under most copyright statutes. In the U.S., the Audio Home Recording Act of 1992 clearly states that consumers have the right to make noncommercial home recordings. Nevertheless, the phonogram and motion picture industries have lobbied extensively for protectionist legislation against audio and video technologies that permit copying, such as dual-well cassette recorders or VCRs. Although some of the more extreme measures have failed to muster legislative support, lawmakers have been generally more favorable to industry calls for protection than to consumer desires for autonomy.

Patterns of consumption also affect the relationship of record companies with their artists. Where major labels once favored long-term arrangements with a relatively small number of heavily promoted artists, they have since the 1980s increasingly adopted a strategy of planned obsolescence -- short-term promotion of a never-ending stream of new artists -- in hopes of achieving market growth. In this respect, phonogram companies have come to resemble manufacturers of automobiles and other durable goods; they must make minor cosmetic changes from "last year's model" to "this year's model" in order to stimulate sales. In popular music, where the "one-hit wonder" was once an object of scorn, (s)he is now an object for emulation. This strategy is bolstered by the discourse of consumer sovereignty -- the idea that the fickle tastes of the public cannot be predicted, that there is no telling which records "the kids" will buy.

Secondary music media such as radio also figure into the appropriative relations of the phase of consumption. Since consumers tend to buy recordings of familiar rather than unfamiliar artists, and since many consumers rely on radio and television to learn about new releases, it is obvious that artists who receive the heaviest media exposure will sell the most records. By restricting their playlists to mainstream hits, most of which emanate from the Big Five labels, today's tightly formatted radio stations make it

doubly difficult for “indie” labels or non-mainstream genres of music to gain exposure other than on community or college stations. Since tight demographic formatting is a byproduct of the deregulation or privatization of broadcasting that has occurred worldwide in the 1990s, one can conclude that state intervention has indirectly benefitted major labels and big-name artists at the expense of newcomers.

Ideology. Two ideological discourses are used to legitimate industry attempts to structure consumption of popular music: intellectual property, which maintains “that musical ideas have an owner who must be compensated every time they are used in a public place” (Negus, 1992, p. 13), and consumer sovereignty, which maintains that consumers are free agents who vote with their dollars and ultimately determine what is produced and disseminated. The discourse of intellectual property is expressed concretely in the form of copyright and piracy laws, which I have already discussed as technologies of consumption, while the discourse of consumer sovereignty is deeply embedded in consumer culture.

Intellectual property laws, which originated with the efforts of European monarchies and religious institutions to control the spread of printing, had assumed a different purpose by the time they were codified in the 18th century. The British Statute of Anne (1710), considered the original copyright law, embodied Enlightenment concepts of the “free marketplace of ideas.” Its purpose was to stimulate intellectual activity by granting creators of works the exclusive right to profit from them for a limited period, after which time the work would become public domain. This philosophy was integrated into the U.S. constitution, which expressly stated that the purpose of copyright was “to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts.”

There have been five major revisions of U.S. copyright law, each incorporating specific provisions dealing with new technologies for publication and distribution. Recent revisions, including the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in 1998 and the so-called Sonny Bono Amendment in 1999, have extended protection granted to copyright holders while further restricting the rights of the public under the fair-use and first-sale doctrines. Copyright revisions have been heavily influenced by lobbyists for media giants such as the Walt Disney Company and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. The ideology of intellectual property deeply pervaded the industry campaigns against MP3.com and Napster file-sharing services.

The ideology of consumer sovereignty is deeply rooted in classical economic theory and its notions of rational economic choice by consumers. In Economics 101 we learn that consumers decide what is produced, because if producers provide something consumers don’t want, they lose money and resources are wasted. The economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1967), critiquing the presumed “unidirectional flow of instruction from consumer to market to producer” (p. 211), argues that the mature corporation “reaches forward to control its markets and on beyond to manage the market behavior and shape the social attitudes of those, ostensibly, that it serves” (p. 212).

Nowhere is the ideology of consumer sovereignty more deeply rooted than in popular music. One of the most durable myths of the music business is that it is an unpredictable, seat-of-the-pants enterprise in which instinct and luck are the most important factors. R. Serge Denisoff (1975), in a chapter titled “The Vinyl Crap Shoot,”

quotes industry figures describing the business as “gambling,” “dice-rolling,” a “buckshot” approach, “throw[ing] it up against the wall to see if it sticks” (pp. 92-98). Keith Negus (1992) delicately describes this as the “mud on the wall” (p. 145) approach; others use even more colorful terminology.

While there are certainly many examples of independently produced and distributed songs that become hits without mainstream industry support, these appear to be increasingly rare. Mass consumption of popular music is highly structured by the dominant entertainment corporations and legitimated by ideologies that are widely accepted by fans, artists, critics, and industry figures that they have gained the appearance of “common sense.”

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to formulate a non-reductionist model of economic activity in popular music. Drawing on the work of Nicholas Garnham (1985), Graham Murdock (1989), and Peter Shields and Rohan Samarajiva (1993), I divide the global circulation of popular music phonograms into separate but interpenetrated phases of production, distribution, and consumption. Following Nicos Mouzelis (1990), I have argued that each phase is characterized by distinctive technologies (forces of production), appropriative relationships (relations of production) and legitimating ideologies. In the last half of the paper, I have applied the conceptual model to an analysis of the dialectics of control in popular music.

Although there is a danger that conceptual models can be applied too rigidly to the study of social phenomena, I submit that a non-reductionist approach such as the one outlined in this paper is best suited to the open-ended study of popular music in the information age.

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Remaking Bob Marley: The Global Branding of a Soul Rebel

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Money doesn't matter. Only music matters. When people think first about money and then about the music the music won't be worth the money they were thinking about. You find that most people when they get money, they get withdrawn and foolish. Money is not my richness. My richness is to live and to walk on the earth barefoot.

(Bob Marley, quoted in McCann, 1993, pp. 85-86)

More than two decades after his death, the Jamaican reggae star Bob Marley is more popular now than at any point during his lifetime -- an achievement he shares with a small fraternity of popular music legends such as Elvis Presley, Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix. Marley's dreadlocked face is one of the world's most recognizable icons, and his name and image are used to market a broad range of products from footwear and fashion designs to themed tourist attractions.

Marley's image handlers have attempted to distance him from the rest of the reggae community, in part because Island Records found in a marketing survey that the word "reggae" had negative connotations. Meanwhile, Marley's widow and children trade on his name to support their own musical careers and business ventures while increasingly withdrawing from Jamaica, the country that spawned reggae music. In this paper, I will analyze critically the marketing of Bob Marley in the years since his death in 1981 and what I will term the "erasure of memory" regarding Marley's Jamaican background, the core values he espoused during his lifetime, and the social history of reggae music.

Fly Away Home to Zion

"One might not think of death as an optimal career move, but for some celebrities, crossing over to the far side doesn't hurt their income in the least," noted *Forbes* magazine in their annual listing of "Top-Earning Dead Celebrities" (Schiffman, 2002). Marley ranked eighth on the list with \$10 million in reported annual earnings, behind Presley (ranked first at \$37 million), former Beatles John Lennon (\$20 million)

and George Harrison (\$17 million), but ahead of Hendrix (\$8 million) and rapper Tupac Shakur (\$7 million).

Marley, who was born in poverty and came of age in Kingston's teeming ghetto of Trenchtown, is one of a handful of artists in popular music who not only died at his peak but left a body of work that has never gone out of fashion and remains hugely profitable. Marley's greatest-hits collection, *Legend*, has sold an estimated 15 million copies worldwide (IFPI, 2003) and was identified by the SoundScan database as the most popular back-catalogue item of the 1990s (Weisbard, 2000). A new series of digitally remastered CDs covering his entire career is being released in 2003 -- marking the third generation of "new and improved" CD releases of an artist who died in 1981, two years before the CD format was introduced.

Marley's estate, originally administered by his widow Rita Marley and Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, has morphed into the "Bob Marley Group of Companies," a complex of not-for-profit charitable foundations and for-profit enterprises. Nonprofit organizations include the Bob Marley Foundation, which conducts charitable activities in Jamaica; Ghetto Youths International, a not-for-profit arts organization run by son Stephen; URGE (Unlimited Resources Generating Enlightenment), son Ziggy's charitable organization; and the Rita Marley Foundation, a NGO based in Ghana, where Rita Marley and some of the Marley children have relocated. Marley's extensive recorded catalogue generates considerable income in mechanical and performance royalties, as well as licensing fees for commercial uses by corporations as varied as the Jamaica Tourist Board and NASCAR, the U.S. auto racing organization.

Profit-making enterprises include Tuff Gong International, the recording and music licensing arm; Tuff Gong Books, which markets books by members of the Marley clan; Catch A Fire, daughter Cedella's line of designer fashions; Bob Marley Footwear, a shoe manufacturer headed by Cedella and half-brother Robbie; and 56 Hope Road, a real estate management company that operates the Bob Marley Museum in Kingston and a themed tourist attraction at Marley's rural birthplace in Nine Mile, St. Ann.

The Marley family also markets a staggering array of merchandise through licensing arrangements with companies in North America, Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Besides the usual posters, t-shirts, sweatshirts and bumper stickers, some of the more exotic items include Bob Marley shot glasses, Catch A Fire bath salts, Bob Marley wristwatches, incense, frisbees, license plates, wallets, keychains, trading cards, hockey jerseys, and (in monumental poor taste) a Bob Marley shoe horn bearing the figure of a topless and very well-endowed mermaid. Ziggy Marley has licensed his own name and likeness to Hemp Bars, a health food product containing hemp seeds marketed by a San Diego company.

The most ambitious attempts to date to capitalize on Marley's name and image are the "Bob Marley Experience," a retail complex at the pricey Half Moon resort in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and the "Bob Marley Tribute to Freedom" restaurant and nightclub at the Universal CityWalk in Orlando, Florida. The former features a retail mall with Bob Marley merchandise, a conference center, and a dedicated 68-seat theater with continuous showings of a film about Marley's life. The latter, modeled after

Marley's former home (now the Bob Marley Museum) in Kingston, features quasi-Jamaican cuisine and live reggae music. It is located next door to "Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville" restaurant and bar, which incidentally serves a red-gold-and-green alcoholic drink called a "Flaming Bob Marley." An NBA restaurant, a Motown cafe, and a House of Blues are nearby.

Plans are even afoot for a Broadway musical based on Marley's life, according to press reports in spring 2003. Ziggy Marley is quoted as saying that the musical "will trace Bob's life from growing up in Jamaica as a young boy, to his rise in becoming an international reggae star and local hero" and that Rita Marley has been involved in meetings about the project, tentatively planned for a 2004 premiere ("Broadway Musical on Bob Marley's Life Planned", 2003).

Even parts of Marley's own body are being marketed, although not by family members. According to press reports, a four-inch piece of Marley's dreadlocks fetched about \$1,500 at an April 2003 sale at Christie's auction house in London. "It's intriguing because it is a part of his body and a very personal gift," said a Christie's spokesman. "Memorabilia like this does not come on the market often" ("Marley's Hair-Raising Auction", 2003). Marley gave the lock to a female fan after a concert in 1980, one year before his death.

The extensive commercialization of Bob Marley has not been without criticism, particularly among Jamaica's Rastafarian community. I will discuss this in the next section.

Babylon System is a Vampire

Because Marley died without leaving a will, and because of extensive litigation over ownership of his recordings, publishing and other assets, the commercial exploitation of his image and music did not begin in earnest until the 1990s, when the Bob Marley Foundation was incorporated and filed trademark registration for his name and picture (Steffens, 2003).

Two of the earliest licensing decisions involved the marketing of alcohol, which most Rastafarians including Marley shun for religious reasons. The Marley estate drew criticism from Bob's teetotaling Rasta fans in 1997 when Marley's song "Jammin'" was licensed to Anheuser Busch for a television spot featuring the animated Budweiser frogs. Earlier that year, the Marley estate had threatened legal action against a Cervezeria Nacional of Panama for using Marley's image on an outdoor sign for De Primera beer. A foundation spokeswoman said "the family particularly objected to Marley's image being used alongside a liquor advertisement" ("Reggae and Beer not Mixing", 1997). In Kingston that summer, I heard Jamaican musicians joking that the Panamanians just didn't offer enough money.

The menu at the Tribute to Freedom restaurant also drew criticism when it opened on what would have been Marley's 54th birthday in 1999. Writing in The Progressive, Rastafarian author Silja J.A. Talvi noted that

the 350-person capacity venue will also serve alcohol, meat and shellfish, all of which Marley shunned and which most Rastafarians disallow in

their natural 'I-tal' diets. Marijuana, which Marley smoked openly and copiously throughout his life -- and which forms another central element of spiritual practice -- has no place in the new Bob Marley club, according to [Universal spokeswoman Kim] Hawk (Talvi, 1999).

Elsewhere in the same article, Talvi quotes reggae bandleader Clinton Fearon (a Marley associate from Trenchtown days) that "you would think that the people that were close to him would at least stay out of such a rat race, but instead it seems as if some of them are the instigators." Another Rasta, Ras Bakul, commented that "once again, dem reggae types just make the money, build dem fortress, and conspicuously consume by demself. The Marleys could afford to buy hundreds of hectares of land to help Rasta become more self-sufficient, but they don't."

Music critic Joshua Green termed the Marley family "graverobbers" in a review of a Bob Marley tribute album that featured overdubbed performances by pop and hip-hop stars "singing along" with Marley. "Marley's shameless heirs, the production force behind this effort, have previously sold their souls ... to such goodwill ambassadors as the Budweiser frogs and have avoided scrutiny simply because they're Marleys," Green wrote. "It's a safe bet that if they could bottle Bob Marley's integrity like Austin Powers's mojo, his family would have it licensed and put up for sale" (Green, 2000).

Gregory Stephens, author of a book on racial identity that contains an extended chapter on Marley, writes that the Marley family charges \$5,000 or more for the use of Bob's name to promote each of the numerous "Bob Marley Day" celebrations that have sprung up in North America. "How long can those of use who love reggae music go on feeding off Bob's remains, relying on his name to pull a crowd?" Stephens wrote. "We'll be forever milking Bob" (Stephens, 2003).

Finally, the Wailers band -- Marley's former backup musicians, now involved in litigation with the Marley estate -- published on their own website this stinging criticism of the crass commercialization of their former bandleader: "The necrophiles responsible for this travesty should be ashamed of themselves and recognize that a person does not need to own Bob Marley shoes, shirts, hats, clothes, or whatever else is in the works, to enjoy his music and obtain his messages" ("Natty Tread", 2000).

These critiques point to a conscious attempt by Marley's heirs to reshape his image in a market-friendly fashion -- to emphasize Marley's undeniable stylishness, sensuousness, and love of a good time at the expense of his fiery revolutionary spirit and relentless campaign for human rights. This will be discussed in a later section. First, I will discuss what appears to be the Marley family's growing estrangement from Jamaica and the wider reggae community.

Moving Right Out of Babylon

Since 2000 -- as wealthier Jamaicans have done for generations -- Rita Marley and the Marley heirs have increasingly distanced themselves from the poor Caribbean country of their birth. According to biographers Stephen Davis (1985) and Timothy White (1988), Bob Marley himself rarely spent time in Jamaica during the last several years of his life, staying instead at a Florida residence he bought for his mother. Ziggy

Marley has been recording a non-reggae CD with rock musicians in Los Angeles, Cedella Marley runs her fashion and footwear companies out of Miami, Stephen Marley is "on the road" more or less constantly, leaving only daughter Sharon Marley in Jamaica minding the family properties there (Talking Drum, 2003).

Rita Marley has now left Jamaica permanently and relocated to Ghana, where she has adopted the name Nana Afua Addo-bea, according to reports in the Jamaica Gleaner and Jamaica Observer newspapers (Pitter, 2000; Campbell, 2002). Mrs. Marley, who has long been the target of scurrilous gossip within Jamaica (I have often heard her described in anecdotes as a controlling and vindictive woman with extravagant tastes), purchased a large estate at Konkonuru, 30 miles from Accra, and has opened a retail store and recording studio in the Ghanaian capital. According to the reports, Mrs. Marley has shifted the locus of her charitable activities from Jamaica to Ghana, financing a school and day care center, public works and road construction, and hospital equipment.

The move has proven controversial at home. Jamaica Gleaner editorial contributor Dawn Ritch, for example, wrote that

Bob Marley's widow Rita, I understand, has gone to live in Africa where she is setting up schools. I, for one, resent that Jamaica to whom she owes so much was not the beneficiary of her kindness. She is one of the very few Jamaicans who would rather live in Africa. Somehow I expect to see her back because, if born here, she will miss the excitement and what all agree are our colourful people. She might as well have emigrated to Cayman (Ritch, 2001).

Ritch's column provoked an impassioned defense from Barrington Laing, manager of the Bob Marley Foundation.

Nana Rita Marley has always done -- and continues to do -- extensive charity-based works in Jamaica and all over the world. ... She also makes numerous personal monetary contributions to individuals and organisations throughout the island of Jamaica. Lest we forget, Sister Rita's religious upbringing and strong faith as a Rastafarian definitely allow her dream of repatriation to her African home to come to reality (Laing, 2001).

Ghana appears to be the focal point of a back-to-Africa movement among entertainers of African descent; soul singer Isaac Hayes, Jamaican sound system entrepreneur Stewart Brown, and reggae performers Anthony B and Admiral Tibet are among those reported to be relocating to the West African country (Talking Drum, 2003; Pitter, 2001).

Meanwhile, back in Jamaica, economic conditions continue to fester and the popularity of the country's leading export, reggae, appears to be dwindling. Longtime Marley associates have admitted feeling left out of the financial bonanza being experienced by Rita Marley and the Marley children.

Bassist Aston "Familyman" Barrett, leader of the Wailers band (which has continued to record and perform without Marley), filed multimillion-dollar lawsuits in U.S. and British courts in 2001 alleging copyright infringement, business defamation and breach of fiduciary duty over "the consistent failure by the Bob Marley estate and Island Records to credit those responsible for songs and records that made Bob Marley famous worldwide as one of music's best-known artists" (Reid, 2001). A press release quoted Barrett as saying that "if Bob were alive today, there wouldn't be legal discussions. He wouldn't have allowed this situation." In 2002, the Marley estate countersued, alleging that the Wailers band have infringed on Marley's "celebrity identity" and were performing his songs without permission ("Bob Marley's Estate Sues Late Singer's Own Band", 2002). Both lawsuits remain active.

In order to explain the reshaping of Bob Marley into a commercially viable franchise, I turn to a body of theory dealing with the nature of collective memory in an environment of media saturation. This is the subject of the final section.

Bob Marley and the Erasure of Memory

The idea that memories can be altered or erased was once the province of UFOlogists, conspiracy theorists and Hollywood special-effects films like Total Recall and Blade Runner. Since the early 1990s, however, the concept has been employed in a different context by a Los Angeles-based school of critical urban theorists including Mike Davis and Norman M. Klein, who uses the phrase "erasure of memory" in the subtitle of a book (Klein, 1997). These theorists discuss the politics of urban redevelopment in post-industrial Los Angeles and document the distortions of historical record that are used to whitewash racial, economic and class conflicts.

Davis (1990, 1998) calls attention to the role of mass media in spreading paradoxical myths about Los Angeles: sunny paradise / futuristic nightmare, glamorous movieland / corrupt Babylon. Klein builds on this by arguing that mediated images of the city (both utopian and dystopian) have been so widely dispersed through movies and television that they constitute a social imaginary, or socially constructed collective memory, that is more believable than the unvarnished reality -- even to Angelenos themselves.

The overall effect resembles what psychologists call 'distraction,' where one false memory allows another memory to be removed in plain view, without complaint -- forgotten. ... The social imaginary has just enough 'truth' to make the false worth savoring, or else no one cares. The audience already senses, very consciously, that it false, but buys it anyway, simply for the thrill of sharing in the magic trick (Klein, 1997, pp. 2, 12)

The social construction of collective memory has been widely discussed by theorists in a number of disciplines. The journal History and Theory devotes an entire issue (Shapiro, 1997) to exploring the relationship between memory and history in a culture where mass-mediated representations are given more credibility than official accounts of events such as the Holocaust or the Kennedy assassination. Other authors discuss the phenomenon in the language of cultural domination: "[T]he subordinate group's ability to express and represent its authentic experience is negated. ... Thus, the

subordinate group comes to experience the world in the codes of the dominant group" (Grossberg, Wartella & Whitney, 1998, p. 190).

The erasure of memory with respect to reggae music is well illustrated by liner notes to a recent compilation of non-Jamaican reggae. Note how author Doug Wendt, a well-known North American critic and radio host, symbolically eradicates the generations of Jamaican music that preceded Bob Marley's career:

It was a quarter century ago that reggae music burst forth from the Caribbean island of Jamaica, fully formed and ready to conquer the world. Through the simultaneous [1973] release of Bob Marley and the Wailers' Catch a Fire and the classic film The Harder They Come, starring Jimmy Cliff, reggae found an international audience for the first time. ... Inspired by 60s soul and protest music as well as Jamaican independence, reggae kept the best instincts of the 60s alive with songs of love and social revolution. ... It is of little wonder that reggae has joined rock 'n' roll as one of the most pervasive, popular musics of our time (Wendt, 1998).

The statement erases the history of Jamaican popular music before 1973 -- pocomania, mento, ska, rocksteady and early reggae -- by claiming that Bob Marley and Jimmy Cliff invented reggae, and by implying that Island Records owner Chris Blackwell, like Columbus, merely discovered it "fully formed and ready to conquer the world." These myths are perpetuated by many mass-market books about reggae (as well as some academic works), which give the lion's share of coverage to artists affiliated with Blackwell.

The "branding" of Bob Marley has involved considerable refashioning of Bob's image (easy, now that he is not around to complain). The social revolutionary who once sang that he felt like bombing a church ("Talking Blues"), and advocated the "total destruction" of western capitalism ("Real Situation"), has been replaced by the natural mystic singing sweet love songs ("Three Little Birds") and making energetic party music ("Jammin"). Twenty-two years after his death, it few music consumers seem to be aware of the difference.

Marley's image handlers appear to be trying to distance him from the rest of the reggae community. According to a newspaper story on the enduring popularity of the Legend compilation, Island Records conducted a survey that "found that the word 'reggae' often had negative connotations, even to people who liked Marley, [so] the word appears only once on the album's back cover, in type so tiny it can't be read without squinting" (Bauder, 1977).

Take, for example, this excerpt from the promotional literature for Cedella Marley's "Catch A Fire" designer clothing label: "Catch A Fire pays homage to the legendary I-Threes and her stylish father, the natty dresser Bob Marley, Cedella's biggest fashion influence" ("Catch A Fire", 2003). Here Marley is reduced from a complex and highly articulate individual to a snappy-dressing "fashion influence." The Marley children, raised in comfortable circumstances and educated in costly private schools, also appear eager to appropriate their father's ghetto roots. "I didn't grow up in the ghetto, but I am of the ghetto, and the music addresses the elements of the ghetto"

Stephen Marley told the Gleaner in December 1995. "So it is the voice of the ghetto speaking to an international audience" ("Ghetto Youths International, 2003).

Writings by several music critics indicate that Marley's hard-core fans feel alienated by the growing commercialization of their hero. A review of the reissued Confrontation album argues that

Reggae today is the party soundtrack of boneheads, and Marley is their pop icon. As the craftsman of dozens of memorable tunes, he is the genre's Elvis Presley and Beatles combined. His songs are blasted at sporting events (pro wrestling as well as NASCAR); they're inescapable at frat parties, and they are covered by countless bar bands on setlists that give equal weight to Jimmy Buffett. Amid all of this white noise, Marley's true accomplishments -- like those of that other great black musical synthesist, Jimi Hendrix -- have been reduced to a cartoon: He's that guy who sang about smoking weed, right? And the posthumous marketing of this fiction has been relentless (DeRogatis, 2002).

Fortunately, as Marley himself suggests in the quote that opens this paper, the music itself lives on. It remains possible to enjoy Marley's music and to heed his liberating message without buying into the crass commercialization of his image and simplistic media representations of his life.

It is difficult to separate Marley's true musical legacy from the hype that surrounds it; author Gregory Stephens notes "the general unwillingness or inability of so many people to truly imagine forwarding Bob Marley's revolutionary spirit in a new container" (Stephens, 2003). Another writer argues that "Marley's music lives on, as do his ideals. And both are ready to be reclaimed from the legions of Tommy Bahama-wearing party hounds by any who share some portion of his spirit and soul" (DeRogatis, 2002). More than two decades after his passing, Marley's own words still ring true:

"Emancipate yourself from mental slavery / none but ourselves can free our minds," he sang. "Won't you help me sing these songs of freedom?"

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