

of the world's problems today. Such market-oriented visions of hermetically sealed communities should be rejected outright. When large record companies call the shots, the effects on music are chilling – commercialize, homogenize and sanitize.

Liberation musicology

Yet, flying in the face of corporate conceit, radical musicians have planted their feet firmly in the real world. By singing or writing music which reflects the struggles and challenges of our times, music becomes *ngoma* – a creative social space for engaging with the community.

Political music is essentially a mode of activist communication

The militant language of *Nueva Canción* – New Song – practitioners reflected a radical use of music for achieving progressive political goals. The movement mobilized a *guitarra armada* of radical musicians throughout Latin America and Spain to use the power of song to educate and organize. Consummate subversives, they played for the poor and dispossessed in factories, rural communities and the streets. Musicians from the Cuban offshoot, *Nueva Trova*, such as Pablo Milanés, crafted beautiful songs layered with a deep sophistication and subtlety. *Trova* singer, Carlos Varela's 'Circulo de Tiza' – Circle of Chalk – is a good example:

'I don't believe in newspapers
with the picture of Saddam
Nor in ideologies, nor in what
will come
The world declares war against...
My religion is not of the cross,
nor the altar
But I'm going to pray that
one day
The 'fog will lift.'

Two cultural revolutions: Mao and Elvis in Guangdong, China.



MARK HENLEY / PANOS

Panamanian salsa king Ruben Blades gave the infectious Latin dance movement a healthy dose of reality: 'I write songs about people not ideology. But in Latin America it's impossible to live without being affected by politics, and so a song about people becomes political.'¹ While fans sweat and gyrate on the dance floor, Blades sings songs about the haunting legacy of Latin America's 'disappeared' (those killed or imprisoned by dictatorial regimes). The combination has proved hugely popular.

Aboriginal musicians in Australia have used music with great effect for popularizing the struggle for land rights and justice. Singers Ruby Hunter, Kev Carmody and Archie Roach, and bands like Yothu Yindi, have been instrumental. Their songs encourage open debate about a range of issues such as the forced assimilation policies of the Australian Government, land rights and reconciliation, AIDS, racism and sexism. They also work with the school system to educate Australian youth. Kev Carmody explains the significance: 'The older generation are set in their ways, but it is great that schools can use the oral tradition, because the curriculum still tells lies about what happened.'²

In South Korea, the art movement *minjung* empowered a vibrant student movement in the 1980s with popular songs criticizing the Government, and called for reunification with North Korea. Shunning the bourgeois fine arts of high-society Korea, the students took inspiration from the shamanistic cultures of the rural dispossessed. The songs were written to be sung at protests, which involved co-ordinated singing by hundreds of demonstrators.

Punk developed in New York and later Britain and was popularized by legendary bands like The Ramones and The Sex Pistols. It was the Do-It-Yourself three-chords-and-a-heartbeat music combined with refreshing in-your-face rebelliousness and anti-establishment lyrics which helped radicalize a whole generation. Punk music quickly became an ethic influencing the radical squatter and autonomous movements in Europe, the anti-communist and anti-authoritarian activists in Central and Eastern Europe, and anarchists worldwide. Next-generation indie-punk acts like Fugazi infused the music with

an even more refined politics, combining hard-edged poetry and hardcore music to deal with issues of corporate power, democracy and corruption in the legal system. The Riot Grrl movement, meanwhile, adopted the DIY ethos of the music and used it as a radical feminist platform.

In the Western classical-music world, Argentinean-born Jewish composer Daniel Barenboim made many waves. First by breaking a long-held taboo in Israel, Barenboim played the music of the German composer and venomous anti-semitic Richard Wagner. Barenboim's controversial move was seen by some to be a profound effort to reclaim what was aesthetically beautiful music and subvert Wagner's anti-semitism by sully it with Jewish hands. Barenboim then raised even more hackles in Israel when he began organizing music workshops and concert recitals with Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab musicians playing together. Israeli musician Gilad Atzmon later followed suit in jazz. Paula Kimper and Wende Person's recent opera *Patience & Sarah* was a major breakthrough for sexual minorities in the conservative world of classical music and opera. The opera – based on Alma Routsong's book *A Place for Us* – recounts the true story of two women who fall in love and go off to live together in New England in the early 1800s, something virtually unheard of in their time.

Political music is essentially a mode of activist communication. By injecting radical consciousness-raising discourse and subversive sound into the public arena, it provides the raw materials and inspiration needed to effect change and overcome tyranny. It is still incumbent upon all of us to take it further. But thanks to the world's rebel musicians, our task is made easier... and funkier! ■

1 Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, WW Norton, London, 1997.

2 As quoted by Susan Milius, *Face the Music: why are we such a musical species – and does it matter*, *Natural History Magazine*, Vol. 110, December 2001.

3 Broughton, Ellingham, Muddyman and Trillo, *World Music: The Rough Guide*, London, 1994.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

Rock Star Kidnap



HI!! HI!! WELCOME TO ROCK STAR KIDNAP!

TONIGHT'S VERY RELUCTANT GUESTS NEED NO INTRODUCTION FROM ME, OTHER THAN - 'WHAT A BUNCH OF SELL-OUT HYPOCRITES.' YES, IT'S-

STING. BONO AND GELDOF!



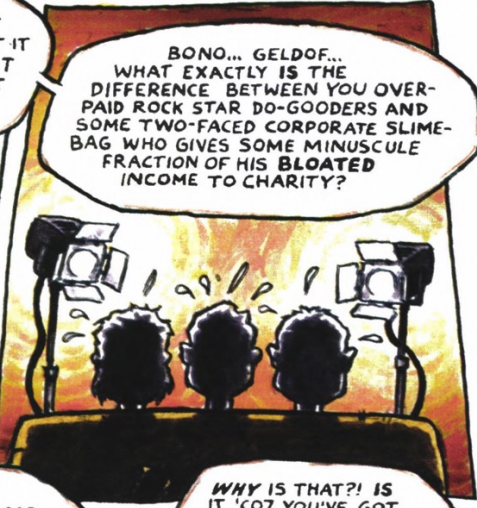
STING-HI!! THANKS FOR BEING HERE! NOW... YOU'VE GOT OVER 300 MILLION BUCKS IN THE BANK, 8 POSH HOUSES, AND AN EXPENSIVE HABIT OF ADVERTISING JAGUAR CARS WHILE WHINING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT...

TELL US- AFTER THE FIRST 100 MILLION, ISN'T IT JUST A TEENSY BIT GREEDY TO WANT EVEN MORE?

BONO... GELDOF... WHAT EXACTLY IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU OVER-PAID ROCK STAR DO-GOODERS AND SOME TWO-FACED CORPORATE SLIME-BAG WHO GIVES SOME MINUSCULE FRACTION OF HIS BLOATED INCOME TO CHARITY?



WHOAH-OH I'M A MILLIONAIRE I'M A MULTI MILLIONAIRE I'M A MILLIONAIRE IN NEWWW YOORCK



IS IT THE SHADES? THE HAIRSTYLES? IT'S NOT THE MONEY- 'COZ BOTH OF YOU ARE WORTH OVER 45 MILLION BUCKS APIECE, RIGHT?

WHY? WHY DON'T YOU EVER SAY ANYTHING RADICAL? OTHER PEOPLE RISK THEIR NECKS STANDING UP TO CORPORATE POWER, YET ALL YOU CAN COME UP WITH IS A LOAD OF VICTORIAN PHILANTHROPIST SHITE!

WHY IS THAT?! IS IT 'COZ YOU'VE GOT YOUR HEADS SO FAR UP THE ESTABLISHMENT'S AR-



MNNG! GAAGL GUGRYDY!



-LET ME INTERRUPT YOU THERE, SIR BOB, AND ASK-

ARMED POLICE OFFICERS! STEP AWAY FROM THE CELEBRITIES - NOW!



...Y'SEE THESE ANTI-GLOBALISATION PROTESTORS DESTROYED A DAY WHERE THERE WAS AN ACTUAL DIALOGUE GOIN' ON BETWEEN SOME AFRICAN LEADERS AND THE MIGHTY...

NO! NO! HU-WHA-?

OOH, BOB- OUR SOFA'S A BIT TOO COMFY- YOU DOZED OFF THEN!

AW, JEEZ- SORRY - OI'VE JUST FLOWN BACK FROM AFRICA DIS MORNIN' AN DOUGH YOU'LL TINK I'M OFF MOI TROLLEY WHEN I SAIY DIS- BUT DE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS DE MOST POSIDIVE FOR AFRICA SINCE...



CHRIST, I AIN'T SMOKIN' ANY O' BONO'S GEAR AGAIN...

(THE CARTOONIST RESERVES THE RIGHT TO STILL LIKE SOME OF THESE PEOPLE'S MUSIC.)