

Origins of music

To highlight the 8gb memory of the new W980 Walkman™ phone, Sony Ericsson has teamed up with renowned world music journalist Nigel Williamson to unearth the origins of our favourite songs.

Music – an international language of global communication

Modern technology means that never before have we had so much music available to us - and never has it been so easy to access it, whether we're at home, in the office or on the go.

Music has become an international language and an ever-present form of global communication. Take a look at your own music collection. You may not realise it, but it is certain to be a library of global sounds and influences in which the old barriers between different genres, styles, nations and cultures no longer exist. These days it seems perfectly natural for an average music collection to include British indie rock, American hip-hop, African rhythms, South American tango and samba, Caribbean reggae, Balkan beats and oriental exoticism, all gloriously colliding together, perhaps with some Icelandic melodies from Bjork and some Mediterranean passion from the Gypsy Kings thrown in for good measure. What's more, within the 8gb song collection on a music mobile phone such as Sony Ericsson's W980 Walkman™ phone, we can walk around with all the music of the world in our pocket - quite literally.

Creating a global music village

We have come a long way. A century ago when recording was still in its infancy, music was still essentially something that people experienced in a live setting. Half a century ago when rock 'n' roll burst on to the scene and changed the world forever, recorded music was part of most people's lives but popular music was still seen as a passing form - records were simply three minute bursts of transient juke box bliss that would be forgotten as soon as the next hit came along.

Even by the time of the Beatles in the 1960s, nobody really had any understanding of popular music's enduring power. Beatles' drummer Ringo Starr once said at the height of Beatlemania that in a couple of years "when it's all over" he planned to go back to Liverpool and open a hairdressing salon. If you had told him that the group's records would still be selling into the next century and influencing a new generation of young musicians, he would simply not have believed you.

Half a century later popular music has a heritage, a history and a tangled web of roots stretching back to blues, folk, country and a vast number of other language styles from all over the globe. This gives it a richness that its early advocates never could have imagined. And as mass communication has made the world a smaller place, music that was once local has gone global, so that you can hear the same songs playing from taxis, cafés and bars from London to Lusaka and from New York to New Delhi. Bollywood singers have found an audience in Los Angeles, there are Japanese salsa bands and the new Madonna album hits the streets in India and Egypt on the same day it goes on sale in Europe and America.

In the music of dance favourites Basement Jaxx you will hear gypsy influences from Romania and Hungary. London-based Trickbaby have sold two million albums in the Indian diaspora after their music was used in a Bollywood soundtrack. Los Angeles rock band Dengue Fever use rhythms borrowed from Cambodian music and even sing some of their songs in Khmer (the official language of Cambodia). The world really has become a global music village.

The music mixing pot

It was not always so. For a time, it seemed that the globalisation of music was simply a takeover bid by western pop. Everywhere you went it seemed the local music scene was being over-run by Elvis Beatles and James Brown impersonators. Many feared that the rich diversity of world music was in danger of being crushed. But local musicians soon came to realise that they could incorporate the best of western pop music and blend it with ethnic rhythms to create new hybrid forms that preserved their own traditions but also had an international appeal.

One of the first to do so was the late great Fela Kuti. The Nigerian bandleader spent time in America in the late 1960s and came under the spell of James Brown. When he returned to the Portuguese coastal city of Lagos he set about fusing his new-found taste for American funk with Nigerian rhythms to create the unique sound of Afrobeat. The roots of black American music, he argued, lay in Africa anyway, so if he was influenced by James Brown, he was merely repatriating a sound that was intrinsically African in the first place. The great jazz band leader Duke Ellington made a similar point when asked once what he thought about African music. "I've been playing it all my life," he answered.

The global music journey

Music is like a global treasure hunt. In every record you hear, there is always a clue that will lead you to the discovery of something else that you haven't heard before, often from a different part of the world and from a quite different culture. Take, for example, American rapper Puff Daddy's 1998 hit Come With Me. The amazing riff was borrowed from the song Kashmir by Led Zeppelin. They, in turn, had based the riff on the Arabic music which Robert Plant and Jimmy Page had heard on their travels in the Middle East and North Africa.

Today we live in music's ultimate golden age. Thanks to modern technology, all of the treasures of the world's music, past and present, are available to us here and now at the push of a button. You can record a few seconds of a song you hear into your Sony Ericsson Walkman™ phone microphone and use TrackID™ to identify it. With more and more phones featuring HSDPA (turbo 3G), you can download music at a fast speed onto your mobile; you're within tapping distance of all your favourite music.

It's a thrilling, ever-evolving journey for the one thing you can guarantee about music is that it never stands still. Music is constantly on the move and within the 8gb song collection on a W980 Walkman™ phone, you can carry in your pocket a truly global collection of the world's finest music, without even realising it.

Region Specific Examples

Trading music across the Atlantic

The transatlantic musical trade routes between Africa and America have become very much a two way street and by the 1980s, the likes of American singer Paul Simon were turning to African music and beyond for inspiration, recording with the 'a cappella Zula' choir, Ladysmith Black Mambazo on his Grammy-winning album Graceland. The process is an ongoing one. The New York-based Vampire Weekend are one of the hottest new rock bands of 2008, with a sound which they openly admit is influenced both by Simon's take on African music and some of the original role models he brought to attention in the west.

Other western rock stars to champion African music and incorporate elements of it into their own music include Peter Gabriel and Damon Albarn, while the American guitarist Ry Cooder won a Grammy award for his album Talking Timbuktu, recorded with the great West African guitarist, Ali Farka Toure. Bjork featured the kora playing of the Malian maestro Toumani Diabate on her 2007 album Volta and Thom Yorke of Radiohead 'borrowed' rhythms inspired by the Congolese band Konono No 1 on his recent solo album, The Eraser.

In turn, if you ask many African musicians about their influences, alongside the continent's biggest names such as Fela Kuti and Miriam Makeba they will cite western songwriters such as Sting and Bob Dylan. Indeed, earlier this year a host of Africa's biggest stars - including Angelique Kidjo (Benin), Vieux Farka Toure (Mali), Tony Allen (Nigeria) and Cheikh Lo (Senegal), recorded In The Name Of Love: Africa Celebrates U2.

This cross-cultural collaboration has been entirely to the listener's benefit, as a quick check of your own personal playlist is likely to prove. It has also benefited the musicians involved, too. As the Malian singer Salif Keita puts it: "White people get the inspiration of African music and we get the popularity." Or as Senegal's Youssou N'Dour once told me: "I don't want to be put in a ghetto called African music. I want to make music that is as popular on the streets of New York and Paris as it is on the streets of Dakar."

It began in Africa

The most ever-present sound on the planet today has to be hip-hop and it is said that today there are more hip-hop groups in Mali's capital city Bamako and Senegal's capital Dakar than in New York or Los Angeles. Yet again, you have to ask who is borrowing from whom. "Every time you listen to Notorious B.I.G. or Tupac Shakur you are hearing the sound of Africa," says Emmanuel Jal, Sudanese boy soldier now turned successful rapper. The rhythms of rap can be traced back to Africa, while its rhyming has a direct link to the traditions of West Africa. When African musicians heard American hip-hop, they instantly recognised its roots, just as they did with blues and jazz and the rock 'n' roll beats of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley.

Indian fusion

So many musical roads lead back to Africa, but that is only one route in the global phenomenon of music on the move. India boasts one of the oldest and most profound musical traditions in the world and over the last half century, it too has interacted with other cultures and traditions to permeate the globe. In the 1950s, Ravi Shankar, maestro of the sitar, began collaborating with the western classical violinist Yehudi Menuhin and jazz musicians such as John Coltrane. It was, in effect, the birth of what today we have come to call 'fusion'.

In the 1960s, pop groups such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones began adorning their records with sitars and Indian tabla drums to lend an exotic flavour. But once again, it has been a two-way exchange. In the 1990s, Indian musicians such as Talvin Singh and Nitin Sawhney began fusing western dance music and Indian sounds while the likes of Bally Sagoo and Aapache Indian, both Indian musicians but resident in the west, became international stars by fusing western and Indian styles to create modern form of bhangra music. Sagoo once described his hybrid style as "a bit of tablas, a bit of the Indian sound...but bring on the bass lines, bring on the funky-drummer beat, bring on the James Brown samples". But how many of the non-Indian audience who bought Sagoo's records or heard Aapache Indian's "Boomshackalack" in several Hollywood movies, realised that bhangra was originally an ancient form of Punjabi folk music associated with harvest time?

English trip hop band Massive Attack has remixed the late, great Pakistani Sufi singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan on Mustt Musst. Then there has been the rise of Bollywood to become an international phenomenon, its film songs now much loved all over the world, the subject of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical Bombay Dreams

and of Cornershop's song A Brimful Of Asha, a tribute to Asha Bhosle, perhaps the greatest Bollywood singer of them all. A Brimful of Asha topped the charts around the world in the late 1990s and contributed to the international explosion of interest in the music of Bollywood. Most of those who bought the record had no idea who the 'Asha' of the title was, but many of them checked out the song's origins and the meaning of the lyric and a whole new world of Indian music was opened up to an audience that might otherwise never have heard it.

Modern influences of Chinese pop

The latest sound to 'go global' - courtesy of Beijing hosting the 2008 Olympic Games - is Chinese pop. For decades, China was a closed culture with little interaction between its artists and the rest of the musical world - the Beatles' records were not officially released in China until more than 30 years after the group had broken up and the Rolling Stones became one of the first western groups to play there as recently as 2006. Yet now China is exporting pop singers such as Sa Ding Ding and Dadawa, whose records have been released internationally and are touring the world.

Jamaican reggae

Another form to conquer the globe, of course, has been Jamaican reggae and ska music (ska combines Jamaican rhythms with jazz and blues). From the Beatles' ska pastiche Ob-La-Di-Ob-La-Da in 1968 to the likes of contemporary hit-makers such as Jamaican reggae artists Sean Paul and Shaggy via Bob Marley, the island Jamaica has certainly made an impact on the global music stage. Shaggy's music, in particular, offers a rich seam for those interested in musical history. He first came to prominence in 1993 with the hit "Oh Carolina". A little research revealed that it was a remake of a local Jamaican 1960 hit by the Folkes Brothers, who sung in an island folk style known as mento, but that their recording of the song is regarded as a crucial link in the development of ska. Suddenly, Shaggy's song is not just a 1990s dancehall hit but a fascinating object lesson in the hidden history of Jamaican music.

Salsa sounds of Latin America

The globalisation of Latin music is even older and the rhythms of tango (Argentina), samba and bossa nova (Brazil), mariachi (Mexico) and cumbia (Columbia) to name but a few are now everywhere. Like Jamaica, Cuba is another island with a profound effect on music-making all over the world that far outstrips its small geographical

size, from the older, stately rhythms of the Buena Vista Social Club to the electrifying salsa beats of today.

The sounds of Eastern Europe

In Europe, the ending of the Cold War in the early 1990s trampled down musical barriers and introduced the wild, untamed sound of gypsy bands from Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and beyond to the rest of the world. Isolated for decades from Western Europe during the Cold War, who would have thought that the Romanian gypsy troupe Taraf de Haidouks would one day provide the music at Paris fashion week and appear in the Hollywood film 'The Man Who Cried' with Johnny Depp and Cate Blanchett? Or that the wavy rhythms of Balkan brass band music would be embraced by American rock acts such as Beirut and A Hawk And A Hacksaw? Many fans of such bands may not even know the roots of such sounds, although to be fair the musicians involved have been only too keen to talk about its origins and have taken East European gypsy musicians on tour with them. You probably would have had to dig a little deeper, however, to discover that Australian Holly Valance's frothy 2002 global chart-topper Kiss Kiss was originally a Turkish song, written by Sezen Aksu and recorded by Tarkan.

Trace your music collection on your W980 Walkman™ phone

The building block of any song is its rhythm and it is not difficult once your ear is attuned to detect the world's different styles and locate where they came from. Here are ten of the most popular world rhythms you are likely to find in your music collection...

1. Soukous

The catching beat of the Congo became an international phenomenon in the 1980s when the likes of Kanda Bongo Man and Papa Wemba became world stars. Its fast-paced swinging beat, vocal harmonies and guitars are unmistakable. You can hear it both in the work of Kofi Olomide, African's biggest-selling contemporary vocalist and in the work of New York indie-rockers Vampire Weekend, whose song Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa makes direct reference to Congolese rhythms.

2. Tango

The dance rhythm of Argentina has been around for a century and at the heart of its sound is an accordion known as a bandoneon. It's dramatic 2/4 rhythm made it a ballroom dancing favourite but in recent years it has found a new, hipper audience via bands such as the Paris-based Gotan Project and South American band Bajofondo Tango Club, who feature electronic samples, beats and sounds on top of a tango groove.

3. Salsa

To be strictly accurate, salsa is not a single rhythm but a collection of them with their origins in Afro-Cuban music and then refined by young Latino New Yorkers in the 1970s. Today you will hear its brassy swing from the pop hits of Gloria Estefan and Shakira to Ricky Martin's *Livin' La Vida Loca*.

4. Bossa Nova

Bossa Nova has been synonymous with Brazil since the 1950s when its sound moved from the beaches of Copacabana to the world stage via Astrud Gilberto's unforgettable *Girl From Ipanema*. Perhaps the best-known exponent of the style today is the New York-based Bebel Gilberto but you will also hear the bossa sound in the work of French experimentalists *Nouvelle Vague* and New York electronic dance band, the Brazilian Girls, to name but two.

5. Ska

Everybody knows Jamaica's reggae rhythm which developed out of the earlier sound of ska (fusion of Jamaican beats with jazz and blues). That might have been the end of its distinctive beat as reggae took over but it has been periodically revived by non-Jamaican musicians ever since, from bands such as British legends Madness and The Specials in the 1980s to such ska-punk bands as America's No Doubt and Less Than Jake.

6. Reggaeton

Blending reggae and dancehall (particularly the influence of Shabba Ranks) with Latin American styles, raga and hip-hop, reggaeton emerged from Panama and Puerto Rico in 2004 with Daddy Yankee's international hit Gasolina. Since then it has made its way into mainstream pop music and its influence can be heard in the work of Sean Paul, Usher, Jay Z and the remix of Paris Hilton's Stars Are Blind featuring Wisin y Yandel, which sold over 300,000 copies online.

7. Mbalax

The African talking drum is probably heard at its most dramatic and exciting in the beating rhythms of mbalax, the dominant sound of modern Senegal. Its prime exponent is Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour, who has had a big influence on western music, collaborating with Swedish vocalist Neneh Cherry, English singer Sting and Haitian born singer Wyclef Jean among others.

8. Makossa

The makossa rhythm started as a hand-clapping game in the African country of Cameroon. Then in 1972 Cameroonian musician Manu Dibango recorded Soul Makossa, which stormed the American charts. Its strong bass rhythm and prominent horn section then fed into disco while the chant of 'mamase mamasa mamakossa' from Dibango's song has since found echoes in Michael Jackson's Wanna Be Startin' Somethin', Eminem's Doe Rae Me and Rihanna's Don't Stop The Music.

9. Afrobeat

No rhythm illustrates better the cross-pollination between African music and black American styles than Afrobeat. Created by Fela Kuti in Nigeria in the early 1970s, its fusion of African rhythms, call-and-response vocals, brooding horns, jazz flavours and funk was heavily inspired by and an inspiration on James Brown. Prominent Afrobeats artists today include the New York band Antibalas and Tony Allen, Fela's

original drummer who now works with Blur's Damon Albarn in The Good, The Bad & The Queen.

10. Bhangra

The traditional music that accompanied bringing in the harvest in India's Punjab has in recent years become one of the world's greatest urban styles. Based around the sound of the huge dhol drums with dramatic vocals, the traditional sound has been crossbred with disco, pop, hip-hop and western dance styles, most successfully in the music of Canada's Jazzy B, California's Jat Sikh, Bally Sagoo and Apache Indian from Britain and India's Malkit Singh, listed in the Guinness Book Of Records as the biggest-selling bhangra artist of all time.

Background information about the author

Nigel Williamson has travelled all over the world writing about music and has interviewed many of the world's greatest musicians from Rolling Stones' frontman Mick Jagger to renowned Indian musician Ravi Shankar.

His articles about his musical travels in Africa, India, South America and elsewhere have appeared in a variety of publications including the UK's The Times, American music magazine Billboard and international music magazine Rolling Stone. He is currently contributing editor to world music magazine Songlines and the UK rock magazine Uncut. He has also judged the BBC Radio 3 awards for world music.

He has written several books that have been published worldwide. These include The Rough Guide to Bob Dylan, Journey Through the Past: The Stories Behind the Classic Songs of Neil Young and The Rough Guide to the Blues. He also contributed to the Rough Guide to World Music. His next book, The Rough Guide to the Best Music You've Never Heard, will be published later in 2008.