The relationship between the art of recording and the musician’s creative process is widely debated. Some observers take a reductive attitude toward reproduction, viewing recording primarily in its distinction from live performance. Benjamin observes, regarding acting, that “the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance.” While true, it ignores the different, though perhaps equally profound, internal process by which film actors or recording artists may adjust their performance for their future audience. The recording performer may have direct feedback; this is the role of the producer in the studio, but it is not equivalent to audience feedback. In fact the objective of that feedback is rarely to re-create a live performance that may be experienced in a similar way to a traditional performance in front of a live audience. For most recording artists this is not the primary goal; they recognize that listening to recordings is a different experience than attending a live performance. In making the recording both the goals and the performances are altered for the sake of the recording, not as an imitation of a performance in front of a live audience. Many artists have abandoned live performance while maintaining active recording careers. Most performing artists now treat the recording process as split from their performing careers, often using different musicians and recording different material than they play in live performance. Modern recording practices represent fundamental changes in the essence of music making rather than re-creations or bastardizations of live performances. As we have seen, the contemporary recording process often involves conceptualizing and creating music in
Chanan critiques the effects of the contemporary, multitrack recording process on musicianship. He argues that this kind of recording practice dislocates the musician from the temporal requirements of live performing such that “the essential activity of the musician, the performance of the music, becomes more and more fragmented.” He maintains that this fragmentation “induces a simplification of musical elements, a reduction in musical complexity, since the artist is relieved of the need to master anything more than basic skills.” While certainly true for some of the commercial popular musicians that Chanan is describing, this should be balanced against Gould, Les Paul, Jimi Hendrix, and the many other pioneers of modern recording techniques who almost certainly believed that their musical virtuosity was enhanced by the recording process. Is what Chanan describes necessarily fragmentation, which suggests a loss of cohesion, or might it also be specialization, which suggests an adaptation? Isn’t the “brutal objectivity of the microphone” as much a challenge to instrumental excellence as it is an excuse for excessive reduction? Might one see the expanded flexibility and capabilities of reproduction as liberating—as an expansion of creative potential? As Frith has said, “Recording . . . has extended the possibilities of expression in all pop genres.” Recording technology may redefine musical skills rather than reducing the need for them. The fragmentation of the recording experience described by Chanan may be understood as a new technologically mediated synthesis of skills rather than as an inferior simulation of live performance.

The cultural and historical legacies of a musician’s process helps to mitigate Chanan’s suggestion of the erosion of musicianship. There is a tendency to romanticize cultural histories and non-Western cultures in the face of the apparent complexities in contemporary Western culture. Small points out that the African cultural focus is on “learning how to live well in the world rather than mastering it”—an attitude that does not agree with the scientifically minded European view that the world must be mastered first in order for one to live better. Small is quick to add that this is not to say “that Africans are in any way better, more instinctively moral, artistic, religious or, especially ‘closer to nature’ than any other human people,” and that this attitude is simply a response to the natural limitations of the African environment. So it is with the creative process—the specifics vary but the process is universal. The culture and the environment define the specifics so each musician’s creative process is unique, but it is...
ultimately guided by the universal imperatives of communication. As the cultural environment changes and interacts with the technological opportunities we witness transformations in cultural expression, but this is not to be confused with a diminution of creative activity.

In describing his lessons in African drumming, Chernoff uses the word “smart” to translate his drum instructor’s comments to him regarding the physical mastery of his instrument. That is, “Your wrist is not as smart as mine” means that Chernoff doesn’t have the correct approach or sufficient relaxation in his wrist to play fast passages properly. Facility is key, so increased facility allows greater creativity—it is “smarter.” Chernoff compares the evolved rhythmic concept of African folklore music to an evolved verbal ability: “The many ways one can change a rhythm by cutting it with different rhythms is parallel to the many ways one can approach or interpret a situation or a conversation.” Increased facility equals a greater range of expression and yields the potential for greater creativity. The specifics of the facility may be physical, mental, or technological, but they all feed the creative potential. One can extend this analogy for how musical function instructs other cultural functions to the heightened facility that the iPod is giving to the construction of the listening experience, or that GarageBand offers to composition. As these tools help to provide the culture with a more musically integrated experience, they assist us in using the functions of music interaction to educate us in other ways. Musical “play” instructs all of life.

Musical creativity reflects the basic struggles of life. The cycle of the human struggle/fulfillment model is transformed by music into an abstract representation that uses the language of emotion. “Art organizes and idealizes life, which, in reality, is often unharmonious and capricious . . . in musical works and performances, control is exercised over contrived events, relationships, refinements, and idealizations,” according to Floyd. This may be interpreted as the power of African-based music in America, but it could easily be read as a validation of the evolution of computer-based recording as well. The ability to shape and control musical events is the essence—the manner in which control is exercised varies in its specifics.

**Creation and (Re)creation**

Creation, production, and consumption form the continuum of artistic cultural expressions. There is the potential for dislocation in this process as
a result of the widespread use of digital samples as building blocks for contemporary audio construction (formerly known as composition). How does the practice of using repurposed audio affect the notion of creativity? Who is the creator and what is the status of that creation when elements are repurposed by one artist that were originally created by a different artist?

Chanan addresses this practice, which had emerged as widespread practice as a result of the digital domination of sound manipulation and was relatively new at the time of his writing. He cites the theorists of postmodernism:

They concur . . . that an altered state of cultural consciousness is involved, in which traditional meanings and values have been set adrift. The flux created by the reproductive technologies of previous generations is merely the precondition for this new state, which adds to the sheer proliferation of cultural products the technical ease with which they can now be recycled and placed in entirely novel contexts; a state, therefore, in which all active traces of the traditional relationship of signifier to signified disappear, as everything becomes a semblance or a simulation.\(^{11}\)

This final reference recalls Baudrillard’s notion of simulation in contemporary culture. Baudrillard cites the example of a visit to the Alsace caves, where there is now a replication built 500 meters from the original—you peep in at the original and then visit the replica. Thus “the duplication suffices to render both artificial.”\(^{12}\)

The question is not how we might discount Baudrillard, but rather how we might accept his point of view without coming to the conclusion that traditional meaning and values have been set adrift. We can start by positing that subjective or “fictive” accounts can be a valid part of musicology.\(^{13}\) The movie *I’m Not There* from director Todd Haynes about Bob Dylan is an example of contemporary music commentary told through fictionalizing actual people and events. While this is discounted by some reviewers as a pointless exercise in obscurity—“To capture the essence of a sometimes pretentious, occasionally unfathomable artist, Haynes has made a sometimes pretentious, occasionally unfathomable film”\(^{14}\)—other reviewers hailed the film as perfectly suited to the monumental figure from popular music because in the end “Haynes makes a portrait not of the singer but of our perceptions.”\(^{15}\) Certainly this was a speculative venture,
but it found widespread acceptance among fans of Dylan and certainly
represented a part of an ongoing shared musical experience, a form of in-
tersubjective agreement. As musical biography it would not have found
much support “within the culture of objectivity that characterized much
postwar musicology and theory,” but our twenty-first-century sensibili-
ties have carried us beyond reduction as the most valid means of describ-
ing how the world is. Chanan’s postmodern theorists, as quoted above,
are involved in a reductionist exercise that seems to denigrate the use of re-
purposed audio as a contributor in a process that sets adrift traditional
meanings and values. Chanan himself challenges this notion by recognize-
ing that “In the new phase of postmodernism, the techniques of reproduc-
tion look set to become a parallel agency of cultural production, and
threaten to nurture new creative potential of their own.” I argue that
such a threat is now very much a reality. An approach that acknowledges
the power of shared experiences allows for an inclusive account regarding
the ascendancy of repurposed audio.

Some of the negativity that arises around recording technologies
stems from an attachment to the notion that music is “natural”—a no-
tion that I set out to debunk in the first chapter of this book. Under-
standing the larger cultural interactions that are a part of musical mean-
ing works against the appeal of a natural musical presence. Tia DeNora’s
work is often occupied with analyzing the everyday participation of mu-
sic as part of the social process. In one essay she approaches music pro-
duction in a context in which musicians’ reputations, musical subcul-
tures and individual tastes combine to create a subjective social
construction. DeNora’s larger point is that musicology that incorpo-
rates social construction “opposes itself to traditional understanding of
what is ‘natural’ in music.” And just as DeNora unpacks this construct-
ion for standard modes of production, so might we unpack the current
repurposed modes of production. When we adopt DeNora’s framework
of seeing music as active in culture rather than simply as a product of
culture, repurposed audio production becomes a predictable conse-
quence of the interaction between the widespread dissemination of
recordings and the creation of new recordings. Contemporary uses of re-
purposed audio are elevated past the morass of Baudrillardian simulacra
into “natural” musical entities in their own right. Creativity is an essential
part of the repurposing process.

Cook notes that while music is often designed for reproduction by
virtue of its having been composed, this is only a part of the picture: inter-
pretation is still always necessary. And though here he may have been imagining interpretation as a constituent contained in performance, we may include the same notion in the manner in which samples are used to construct new music. Recording technologies have become tools for new music creation as much as or more than devices meant for recording—in the sense of documenting—performances. Théberge points to the transformation of the turntable from “a quintessentially reproductive device, into a productive one, a musical instrument of the first order.” These technologies represent the ongoing continuity between composition and production—not their dislocation.

In specific applications, repurposed audio clips may incorporate a legendary quality. Take, for example, the often-repurposed “funky drummer” clip from James Brown’s drummer Clyde Stubblefield. Mark Katz notes that it “enjoys a promiscuous, chameleonic existence [in that] something of the original sound is maintained, yet its meaning changes in every new setting.” Here the notion of interpretive performance has been extended to the reuse of previously recorded audio. This becomes heightened when the clips used refer to some familiar, even iconic, moment in recording history. These clips take on a kind of mythic status and this further informs the experience of the new musical creation. Katz refers to this as a kind of “performative quotation” though I prefer the phrase interpretive repurposing to emphasize the importance of the new context over the reference (or original “text”). The referential quality of the repurposed audio is important, but the new context—the active interpretation—extends the meaning beyond the reference.

Recognizing this mythologizing capability as a part of the world of repurposed audio helps us to place it in the larger cultural context. Cook wishes to expand music analysis to include metaphor and fiction, and in doing so he compares this approach to myth, for it renders things “negotiable [by] formulating them in terms of the experiences that are familiar to any member of the culture in which the myth originates.” That is to say, “mythopoeic explanation takes place entirely within a culture: it explains things to culture-members in terms of culture-specific knowledge.” This is why the Dylan movie works. And this is why these iconic music clips speak volumes to culture-members who share the experience of the original recordings. Repurposed audio is capable of communicating far beyond the surface content of the music, the performance, or the recording that has been repurposed. Ultimately it is capable of broadening encounters with the entire history of music.
Reciprocity Abolished

I have argued for an essential reciprocity between human agency and technology, original and copy, and live performance and recording. Although reciprocity is supposed to be indicative of equality—an equal mutuality—it is difficult to release the tendency to privilege the first in each of the three pairs mentioned above. Yet in contemporary Western culture there is evidence that sometimes the mechanical reproduction is preferred over the original. This reversal of the typical hierarchical status in these relationships reinforces the true reciprocity between them. However, applications of repurposed audio go even farther. Repurposed audio takes the copy and makes it into the original, the sample becomes a piece of the new recording, the recording becomes a piece of the live performance. Repurposing undermines the dichotomies and may even render the notion of reciprocity obsolete.

For many musicians and performers the act of making recordings has become more essential than playing live concerts. Perhaps this reflects Barthes’s idea that “text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination,” and for many artists the destination of recordings is considerably broader than that of the live performance. It also reflects Said’s observation: “It is appropriate to stress the social abnormality of the concert ritual itself.” He describes the concert as “an extreme occasion, something beyond the everyday, something irreducibly and temporally not repeatable, something whose core is precisely what can be experienced only under relatively severe and unyielding conditions.” Although it is unlikely that Said intended this reflection on the contemporary concert experience as an argument that favors recording over performing, his assessment may be used as a means of contrasting certain live music experiences with contemporary recording practice. We may now record audio—to the highest contemporary levels of fidelity—in the relaxed atmosphere of our own homes. We can produce music of all types and styles, drawing on instruments and even incorporating performances from all over the world in very elaborate and potentially creative ways. Contrast this with Said’s notion that “Above all, the concert occasion itself is the result of a complex historical and social process . . . that can be interpreted as a cultural occasion staked . . . upon the audience’s receptivity, subordination, and paying patience.” In this context, home recording becomes the more essential, the more integrative experience, and the implication for reproductions made in that environment is that listening to them may be more essential than attending the stilted live performance described by Said.
Said further indicts the evolution of performance in considering the original intention of some of the compositions that are today a part of the classical repertoire. He notes that many of the works by Beethoven and others were written for nonprofessionals. Of these he notes that “executing such a work is no longer an act of affection (amateur is a word to be taken first in its literal sense).” Again, to the extent one may value an active amateurism, this exists today in the world of home recording, as evidenced by the proliferation of Ivey and Tepper’s “weekend warriors” described above. Of course one may dispute the value of this kind of recreational recording—digital audio applications have enabled unschooled musicians access to complex tools of composition and arranging. Are the results of these capabilities of value? This may depend somewhat on distinguishing between the value of process and the value of product, but that really isn’t the question. Were the results of the original amateur performances of Beethoven of value? To the extent one wishes to assign value to forces of egalitarianism one must embrace the advancements in recording technology.

Barthes traces the disappearance of the musical amateur, as they moved from the “province of the idle (aristocratic) class [and the] democracy of the bourgeoisie (the piano, the young lady, the drawing room, the nocturne) [but] then faded out altogether (who plays the piano today?).” Although he mentions that the “practical” music today is embodied in the young generation of guitar and vocal music, he nonetheless asserts that today’s performer is the specialist whose whole process is removed from public understanding and who essentially “abolishes in the sphere of music the very notion of doing.”

The history of music (as a practice, not as an “art”) does indeed parallel that of the Text fairly closely: there was a period when practicing amateurs were numerous (at least within the confines of a certain class) and “playing” and “listening” formed a scarcely differentiated activity; the two roles appeared in succession, first that of the performer, the interpreter to whom the bourgeois public (though still itself able to play a little—the whole history of the piano) delegated its playing, then that of the (passive) amateur, who listens to music without being able to play (the gramophone record takes the place of the piano).

What Barthes fails to anticipate is the rise of the new musical amateur around the technology that first produced the gramophone record, as documented above in the cycling from the iPod to GarageBand. Computers provide the platform for new musical creations, the end result of which is
a recording rather than a live performance. The process once again reduces the gap between this new kind of musical “playing” and “listening” and has returned some portion of the population back to the virtual drawing room via mp3’s posted on the Internet, podcasted, and burned to CD for friends.

The history of popular music in the twentieth century is rife with examples of how recording created preferred modes of performance. Louis Armstrong came to prefer the studio to live performance during the time of his classic work with the Hot Five: “In the recording studio Armstrong was insulated from both the danger of failure and the lure of easy applause.” In 1966 the Beatles ceased performing and declared themselves a studio band. In 1974 the band Steely Dan swore off live performance and proceeded to become an international phenomenon. For these artists production is intended to serve reproduction, and in the hierarchy of original and copy the predilection to privilege the original in the reciprocal relationship is reversed.

While over the latter half of the twentieth century the hierarchy of “live” performance over recordings continued as an idea, in actual practice it had evaporated. And in the realm of popular music, as Toynbee notes, “What seems to have happened by the 1950s was that this need for an authentic moment behind the record, had lost its repressive hegemony. The record had became [sic] normalized.” The term live has become a musical performance qualifier rather than a marker of legitimacy set against the pejorative “canned” that was once used for all recorded music. “Live” is a subset of performance in general, and indeed, a smaller subset of the more frequently experienced musical performances made for recordings.

Recording technology has also transformed live performance. In an early example, the vocal style that came to be called crooning was made possible by the widespread use of amplification. The new technology of the electric microphone allowed the translation of these intimate, softly delivered vocal performances—carrying their sound over loud accompaniment in large public arenas. All of a sudden you didn’t have to project to the back of the concert hall. Today, live performances have adopted many recording technologies, including the use of repurposed recordings. Live performances are often simultaneously broadcast (or podcast) to remote audiences, which is to say they are reproductions at the same time that they are live events. Not only has the preference for live music over recordings dissipated, the two have lost a clear distinction to such an extent that even to describe them as reciprocal misses the extent of their comingling.
The emergence of the amateur recordist and the ascendancy in the proliferation of recorded music over live music reflect important new characteristics of music creation and production. They also represent a reversal in the kind of commercialization of music that seemed to condemn music creation to the realm of the professionals. At the same time repurposed audio in the form of identifiable elements from prior recordings may allow for a unique kind of contemporary dialogue between musical histories. The merging and blurring of the relationships between creator, performer, and consumer is characteristic of the broader influence of music participation on cultural structure and function.

**Intellectual Property and the Creative Commons**

There are two contemporary practices in music that are pervasive and that have received considerable attention from both academic and popular cultural observers. These are sampling and cross-cultural appropriation. Both have implications beyond the scope of my research, but both have a direct connection to the idea of repurposing audio, and it is this relationship that I will explore over the next two sections. This is not intended as comprehensive, but focuses on the ways in which the idea of repurposed audio can bring a new understanding to these sometimes thorny issues.

In the current era of sample usage and repurposed audio, the debates have raged over intellectual property. At the forefront of the debate in this country is the balance between fair usage and copyright. Fair usage argues for a “creative commons”—a cultural heritage that is shared and available to everyone—and copyright seeks to protect creative works so that there is economic protection and stimulation for the act of creation. Internationally there are more generalized issues stemming from essential differences between free and permission cultures. As far back as 1977 Attali foresaw the problems by observing that the capabilities for individual reproduction were falling further outside of the normal economy: “It is conceivable that, at the end of the revolution currently under way, locating the labor of recording will have become so difficult, owing to the multiplicity of the forms it can take, that authors’ compensation will no longer be possible except at a fixed rate, on a statistical and anonymous basis independent of the success of the work itself.” Attali recognized the requirement of having an economic base for creativity—“people must devote their time to producing the means to buy recordings of other people’s time.” At the
same time he anticipates the new paradigms of audio construction in suggesting that “the destruction of the old codes in the commodity is perhaps the necessary condition for real creativity.”

In regard to generalized sampling use (as opposed to cultural appropriation discussed below) Katz asks whether “digital sampling introduced a fundamentally new compositional aesthetic, or is it best understood as an extension of older practices?” He argues that because samples are altered, they bear a relationship to other forms of musical borrowing such as “quoting” from earlier famous pieces (as has long been the case in classical music). By drawing a comparison between digital samples (1s and 0s) and musical notation—both are symbols and thus representations as opposed to actual sound—Katz suggests that while “sampling does not differ from traditional musical borrowing in kind, it certainly differs in degree.”

It is appropriate to create a direct link in heritage from these earlier practices, but I think the larger point is the new paradigm of audio construction that has arisen from the use of recorded samples as musical building blocks (as opposed to referencing or quoting musical ideas). Katz certainly acknowledges that this new type of borrowing—which I call “repurposing”—“has led to some astonishingly creative works of modern music,” and he reviews a few interesting pieces of music derived from sampling. What is most important about repurposed audio construction, however, is not its link to these past practices or to specific instances of its creative use, but its participation in the compositional environment in the computer. Repurposed audio lies at the heart of a compositional revolution on the scale that Attali suggests when appealing to the “destruction of the old codes.” The practical use of repurposed audio takes us far beyond the idea of musical references to whole new arenas of musical creation through radically different forms of music construction.

Katz recognizes the extent to which sampling “blurs the traditional distinction between ideas and expression.” Whose idea is it once a sample (clearly the work of a previous author) has been expressed (repurposed) in a completely new environment? He notes that relative to intellectual property, this confusion between original and repurposed audio created by digital sampling “muddies the distinction almost beyond recognition.” This element of the ramifications of sampling brings us back to issues regarding ownership and economics, which have been the source of the white hot debates regarding illegal downloading of music through peer-to-peer file-sharing. At the heart of the debate are complex issues regarding fair usage, copyright, and the history of music creation and ownership that, while be-
yond the scope of this work, are clearly made increasingly difficult by the technological and communication capabilities in contemporary media culture.

Issues concerning file-sharing also arise on a global level between permission and free cultures. It is not possible to adapt Western principles of intellectual property in all cultures, whether or not it might be deemed to be desirable. There are many oral music traditions that don’t even acknowledge the idea of a composer. Cultures may wish to protect the free use of creative materials within their own culture but implement a permission requirement when these materials are used by other cultures. This creates enormous legal and accounting problems. Nonetheless, as we shall see with issues of appropriation as well, it is necessary to tackle these problems and to develop the systems needed to do so wherever possible. While problems surrounding appropriation are most often considered from the perspective of the appropriator the following, from “Gone Digital: Aboriginal Remix and the Cultural Commons” by Kimberly Christen, is indicative of the new attitudes arising within the cultures which have themselves been so frequently appropriated.

Indigenous knowledge systems are often defined by communal ownership, while Western systems are usually anchored to individual ownership. This individual/communal view often masquerades as the inherent differences between indigenous peoples and the West. But indigenous concerns do not align neatly with any one agenda. In fact, attempts by the U.S. recording industry to define file sharing as “online shoplifting”—especially in the prominent peer-to-peer (p2p) file-sharing debates—resemble the highly visible agendas of some indigenous leaders to protect their cultural heritage from the same types of stealing. The 2003 Indigenous Position Paper for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) states for example, that, “Our collective knowledge is not merely a commodity to be traded like any other in the market place. We strongly object to the notion that it constitutes a raw material or commercial resource for the knowledge-based economy of the Information Society.” Like some of their corporate counterparts, international indigenous representatives want to limit the circulation of particular ideas, (tech) knowledge, and cultural materials. In fact, they “strongly reject the application of the public domain concept to any aspect related to our cultures and identities” and further “reject the application of IPR (intellectual property rights) regimes to assert patents, copyrights, or trademark monopolies for products, data,
processes derived or originating from our traditional knowledge or our cultural expressions.”

Serious reform of copyright laws and the granting of fair use and public domain rights may be needed, but these would have to be balanced against the global need for some adapted principles of intellectual property. Where this balance lies will be endlessly debated and redefined. “Free” cultures are moving toward protecting their unique cultural expressions. Permission cultures struggle to deal with fairness issues in light of the opportunities created by ease of access. It is critical that in the process we do not lose sight of the benefits at both ends of the spectrum between intellectual property and the creative commons.

Appropriation and Appreciation

There is an oft-repeated quote: “Lesser artists borrow, great artists steal”—attributed with certain variations to Stravinsky, Picasso, and others. While clearly an oversimplification, this statement lends a certain perspective to the issue of musical appropriation. Nonetheless, the creative and communicative power of repurposed audio must be set against questions regarding the appropriation of cultural expressions. Here I will consider economic, ethical, political, and musical issues surrounding the practice of cross-cultural audio repurposing. Ultimately I return to the model of my construction of the African folklore piece “Milee Yookoe.” There are no clear or simple answers here. Composers and musicians must struggle with balancing access against fairness, creation against exploitation, and cross-fertilization against empowerment.

Cook dismisses the simply negative view regarding creative encounters with music of cultures other than our own: “the way you become pessimistic is by assuming that music represents the world-views of cultures from which we are cut off by time, space, or both.” But he wants to provide balance as well: he adds that we must be careful not to take this too far, for “if music can be a means of cross-cultural understanding, it can be a means of cross-cultural misunderstanding, too.” Ultimately he describes the potential of cross-cultural music fertilization as a point of connection but not a means of dissolution of cultural differences. This is a nicely balanced position, though it leaves much in the way of specific considerations still to be negotiated.

The most problematic aspects of the use of samples from other cultures
have been carefully outlined by Paul Théberge and are summarized in the following three points of view, intended to “deflect ethical, political, or musical criticism of the cultural appropriation that has taken place.”

1. Théberge cites a review that raises the typical arguments against appropriation including cultural exploitation, music that is diminished by removal from context, and use of appropriated samples as a “jaded substitute for musicianship,” and then seems to dismiss them all through an attitude that suggests that “aesthetic experience—indeed, simple musical pleasure—should take precedence over all ethical or musical concerns.” Théberge counters this rather simplistic argument by citing examples of originators of musical samples that do not receive adequate remuneration or credit for their work: “Thus, a basic asymmetry, both in terms of economic gain and artistic acknowledgement, exists between the makers and those who are the objects of the sampling enterprise.” Clearly an attitude that disregards some of the concrete problems that are created by sample appropriation, in the name of “simple musical pleasure,” cannot stand up to very close scrutiny. This is somewhat reminiscent of the whole covers debate that fueled some of the rhetoric of “authenticity,” though recorded cover versions are clearly protected by copyright laws and have legal, statutory payment requirements.

2. “A second discursive strategy trivializes the act of appropriation, depoliticizing it by rendering it banal.” Théberge cites the oft-repeated metaphor in which samples are described as a kind of spice—a taste or flavor that a creator uses to enhance their musical creation—making the sampling artist into something of a gourmet as opposed to an appropriator of someone else’s work.

3. Finally, and most significantly, Théberge notes that the music that is sampled is empowered in a way that twists the true hierarchical relationship between the elements “by portraying the recorded subject as active and the sound recordist as passive.” Quoting another promo piece that touts certain samples as providing access to (in this case) the heart of African music, he comments: “Here, sampling musicians (descendants of a former conqueror) are not only changed by their encounter with African music but appropriate it fully as a part of their own musical identity: by looking ‘within’ for true music, one finds not one’s own music but ‘Africa’ in technological forms.” Thus the promoter “characterizes appropriation as a form of cultural exchange
among equals and the inevitable byproduct of larger social forces, such as the diffusion of modern communications technologies and increased cultural contact in the ‘Global Village.’” Clearly for Théberge such a characterization seeks to subvert the political and economic realities hidden behind such catchall phrases as “Global Village.”

Théberge references Stephen Feld, who has done much of the seminal work in the area of pop music’s cultural appropriation and the subsequent attempts to hide or ignore economic interests and inequities in order to avoid constraints to the marketplace. And just as appropriation cannot be split from commodification in regard to “the production, marketing, and use of world music samples, questions of musical identity cannot easily be separated from questions of ownership.” Yet questions regarding the realistic capabilities of individuals or companies to address these tangled associations remain.

David Hesmondhalgh takes off from this point to address some of these issues surrounding identity and ownership in more detail. In the article “Digital Sampling and Cultural Inequality” Hesmondhalgh acknowledges that “Cultural exchange and cross-fertilisation can be pleasurable, and can suggest the possibilities of communicating across boundaries of social difference. But there may be a darker side to such practices.” Through meticulous analysis Hesmondhalgh details the inadequate responses of those who use musical samples from other cultures. He does not suggest that the overall effect of sampling has been negative but he does argue that the response in terms of protection for sampled musicians has been lacking. Ultimately Hesmondhalgh asserts the need for those in positions of power to see that “full and prominent credit . . . be given to the sampled musicians and the musical traditions to which they belong, giving indications of the cultural sources of the music” and for sample users to “make strenuous efforts to establish ways of recompensing musicians, their descendants, or representative organisations.”

Taylor affirms the notion that the emphasis on globalization is, at least in part, an obfuscating technique to hide the hegemony of capitalism, which he sees to be exploitative as ever. The term globalization itself serves to maintain a distinction between this global marketplace and the notion of local cultures. Taylor adopts the term glocalization, which emphasizes the extent to which the local and the global are no longer distinct—indeed, never were—but are inextricably intertwined, with one infiltrating and implicating the other. Indeed, it may now be difficult or
impossible to speak of one or the other. Older forms and problems of
globalization continue but are increasingly compromised, challenged,
and augmented by this newer phenomenon of glocalization.64

It is this recognition of the blending of global and local that in part dic-
tates the need to find the distinctions between the good and the dangerous
elements of cross-cultural appropriation. Thus Hesmondhalgh begins his
critique of the implementation of world samples by acknowledging its
benefits. Similarly Théberge acknowledges that the use of other people’s
music “is at once fragmentary and exceedingly rich.”65 In a case study of a
1998 dance music hit that is laden with samples, Mark Katz notes that the
ultimate product is “derivative and novel, exploitative and respectful, awk-
ward and subtle.”66

We must also factor in some of the cultural shifts that make glocaliza-
tion a more appropriate term than globalization for contemporary cultural
exchange. The fact is that the technological divide is rapidly shrinking—at
least as it relates to the creation and production of music: “The ethno-
graphic Other is now fully plugged in, and the ethnomusicologist is no
longer the only person in the field with high-tech equipment.”67 The ex-
change is increasingly two-way with idioms such as Afro-pop and Indian
pop sharing extensively in the process of repurposed audio and technolog-
ically constructed musical composition. This is not to suggest that all cul-
tures are equivalent, but it is to acknowledge that the notion that musical
hybridization is simply a one-way street of Western appropriation of mu-
sic from indigenous cultures is increasingly inappropriate.

I believe the complexities of so-called appropriation—and I think that
as this phenomenon becomes more complex the reduction and connota-
tion of the word appropriation become more problematic—go even deeper
than this carefully nuanced value system of positive and negative effects.
Cook demonstrates that in different cultures the experience of music may
be radically different. For example the thumb piano in Africa is thought of
as a series of movements, not as sounds; Chinese qin music is considered a
means of focusing the mind and not thought of as sounds. So “to approach
another culture’s music from an aesthetic viewpoint is to interpret it in an
ethnocentric and therefore partial manner.”68 This not to say that sound
doesn’t have meaning in those other cultures as well (or that movement,
etc., doesn’t have musical meaning in our culture)—it’s just not what’s cen-
tral to their experience. Cook is saying that when we listen to recordings—
or I would add, repurpose them as samples in new compositions—it’s not
possible to restore their “original social function. . . . To approach music aesthetically—to interpret it in terms of a specific interest in sound and its perceptual experience—is not, then, to transcend Western cultural values, but rather to express them.”

So are we really getting a sufficiently complete picture when we label contemporary music’s intersection with sampling from other cultures as appropriation? If both the use and experience of music from these other cultures are primarily an expression of one’s own culture, then the idea of appropriation would seem to overstate the principle of what such reuse is actually an expression of. Perhaps repurposing is a more accurate and less pejorative term for such reuse. The term repurpose places the emphasis on the audio’s new environment, its newly imagined purpose, and not so much on the lifting (or appropriation) of its previous significance, transference of which is not truly possible anyway.

Another part of the problem with the connotations of the word appropriation arises when a relative value judgment is assigned to creative repurposing (as opposed to the judgments regarding credit or remuneration for such usage). Théberge suggests that Bartok’s appropriation of Hungarian folk music is “qualitatively different from the fleeting juxtaposition of collage that have become the preferred idiom of contemporary technoculture. . . . With vast decontextualized collections of sampled sound available on CD-ROM, technoculture neither allows for the type of profound encounter experienced by a composer such as Bartok, nor is it required.”

What constitutes a profound musical encounter? Given the difficulties that one culture might have in truly understanding the musical context of another, how can anyone be sure that such an encounter has taken place? At what point does such decontextualization take place? Isn’t such decontextualization an immediate (and even desired) effect of any musical repurposing? Where is the line between intracultural appropriation (from folk music to Bartok’s compositions or blues to rock) and intercultural appropriation (from African to Western pop) really drawn?

The piece of African folkloric music that I have constructed is an example of a relatively amateur exploration of music through the newly created capabilities of computer-based audio production. On the surface this may appear to epitomize Théberge’s decontextualized encounter with (in this case) African music. But the reality is that I studied African music for many years with a master drummer from Ghana. Yet whatever relationship my work may bear to an original performance of this music by Africans was not the point of this undertaking anyway. This is a satisfying
creative endeavor for me. This process provides me with creative access to a form of music that I am not capable of accessing physically (that is, I couldn't play these drum parts as a live performer). It is as much (and as importantly) an encounter with technology as it is with music, and this encounter has enormous context for me, who lives so much of my musical life through my use of the computer for creating and manipulating music. The exercise is intentionally, and for me very positively, a conscious act of decontextualizing.

Similarly whatever relationship this may bear to an original performance of this music by Africans was not the point for whoever may hear this piece. Were Bartok's compositions meant to familiarize or even provide entry to Hungarian music, or were they simply made richer through his personal encounters with that music? When I play my construction of “Milee Yookoe” for friends it provides an experience of some musical concepts and forms that they may never have otherwise had, and this broadening of experience is the point and the value, not its direct African referents (which we can only experience in a very incomplete way anyway because of the cultural differences). So what one critic might characterize as my appropriated (and highly inauthentic) “recording” (which wasn't recorded in any traditional sense of the word) might provide a more interesting and rewarding experience for listeners than what they might have had listening to a recording of the original African piece from which my work was derived. Indeed, were they to have the opportunity to experience an indigenous live performance of this music, they might still prefer my more formalized, recorded version, as it would have more cultural relevance for them. They might identify more strongly with the underlying disco-like beat and the formality of my arrangement. They might also identify with the very act of cross-cultural interpretation, of reaching out from one culture into another, which is so prevalent in contemporary music.

Both Théberge and Hesmondhalgh cite Steven Feld's work, which lambastes some of the early, cavalier attitudes toward sampling of indigenous music, and both are themselves highly critical of such attitudes. However, both wish to go beyond exposing the wrongs of the past. They are attempting to formulate what might constitute right action given the widespread use of indigenous samples. Certainly attempts to better credit and remunerate original artists are worthwhile, but they will become increasingly difficult in the context of glocalization and the massive jumble of worldwide cultural artifacts. Again, this is not to say that all best efforts shouldn't be made, but it is to say that such efforts are ultimately at least
partially doomed behind the increasing complexity of our glocalized worldwide culture. I do not wish to minimize the economic hegemony of the West, but cultural expression is playing out on such a broad scale and in such a multiplicity of fragmented contexts as to make both credit and remuneration an increasingly difficult endeavor.

For Frith the current use of samples is a part of the reason that “We certainly do now hear music as a fragmented and unstable object.”74 As such, it is as much an expression of the urban landscape—urban sprawl, the barrage of media input, and the isolation of automobiles for example—as it is an evolution of recording technology. We might reference contemporary constructed audio projects as expressions of Baudrillard’s “model of the disintegration of functions, of the indeterminacy of functions, and of the disintegration of the city itself.”75 The difficulties in acknowledgement and credit may become lost in what Baudrillard terms the hypermarket, in which “the objects no longer have a specific reality” and there exists a “detrimentalized function and mode of work.”76 The postmodern forces of complexity and fragmentation will continue to render so-called notions of appropriation more inappropriate to cultural understanding. These forces may undermine certain capabilities of music to reinforce social cohesion, but at the same time they may be providing new forms for music to help us cope with expressions of deterritorialized social functions. Finally, the notion of repurposed audio allows the creative forces the upper hand and rescues many contemporary musical practices from the stigma of appropriation.