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## 'Lookin, searchin, seekin, findin':

### A new beat

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In his 2007 article reflecting on *Perfect Beat's* fifteen-year history, founding editor Philip Hayward analyses lyrics from Afrika Bambaata and the Soul Sonic Force's 1983 single 'Looking For The Perfect Beat' in relation to this journal:

'Mortal motivations / searching for the perfect beat'. The emphasis on mortality is significant. Many journals are short-lived, either folding due to a lack of organisation, funding or other factors. Fifteen years is already a healthy lifetime for a contemporary culture journal... If it can continue searching for new engagements, debates and issues, and for new ways of expressing and enlivening these, its current editors may have the opportunity to pen a series of reflections on its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2017 (2007: 12).

Today, a few years after its landmark 20th anniversary, *Perfect Beat* is indeed searching for 'new engagements, debates and issues' and 'new ways of...enlivening these', as indicated in our title for this article (which also cites Afrika Bam-

baata's lyrics). This issue marks 'a new *Beat*', in that it debuts both a new editorial team—the fifth since the journal's inception in 1992—as well as a new subtitle that formally includes Asia in the journal's research frame, expanding it beyond the Pacific. We are delighted to present *Perfect Beat: The Asia-Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*, under the guidance of executive editor Mark Evans, editor Shelley Brunt, assistant editor Oli Wilson and reviews editor Catherine Strong.

## **A new scope**

With a new team comes a fresh vision, as well as the ratification of existing yet un-formalized practice. The revised scope reflects the reality that *Perfect Beat* has already been publishing research about Asia for many years. A stocktake of issues up to 2007 revealed that 8 per cent of the journal's articles focused on 'East and South East Asia' topic clusters (Hayward 2007: 9). This figure, although seemingly small, is significant when considering that the same stocktake also showed that 8 per cent of articles were about the Pacific Islands. The dominant areas were New Zealand (12%) and Australia (44%). From 1994, this broader Pacific region—comprising the Pacific Islands, New Zealand and Australia—became the journal's principal focus. Even a cursory look at the table of contents from subsequent issues demonstrates the recurrence of Asian topics. In the issues for 2008 and 2009, which may be considered representative examples, there were articles about Japanese jazz, J-pop and Amani culture, Thai country music and television, and Okinawan music. A discussion about formalizing 'Asia' as part of the journal's brief, and incorporating this into *Perfect Beat*'s title, was perhaps first voiced at a *Perfect Beat* editorial board meeting in June 2012. By this stage, two special issues about Asian music were already underway or published. The first, volume 12 issue 1, was compiled and edited by Adrian McNeil and focused on 'the advent of modernity', 'rise in nationalism' and cultural traditions, with articles about Japanese instruments, Malaysian composers, Balinese music and the Thai *lukthung* genre (2011: 9). The second, volume 12 issue 2, featured guest editor (now editor) Shelley Brunt and concentrated on the popular musics of Asia, exemplified through articles on Hong Kong singers on television, Indonesian rock, Korean indie and Singapore metal. In her opening article, Brunt noted the surge of interest in Asian popular music/culture topics as exemplified by recent publications solely about Asia, as well as 'a firm shift away from the privileging of Anglophone-centric popular music from North America or the United Kingdom as the popular music norm' (Brunt 2011: 103). It is worth recalling and paraphrasing the definition of 'Asia' that was

put forward for that issue, as we use it here as a model for the future scope of the journal in general:

Clearly, Asia is a geographical area of considerable size that has fluid boundaries and distinct cultural and musical practices in the many regions within this space. However, the purpose of this [new scope is not to achieve an] exhaustive account of all popular musics from Asia, or its diasporas, but instead to present perspectives on selected cultural areas. In this way, [*Perfect Beat*] is concerned with highlighting new work on topic areas within Asia, but it is also governed by the breadth of writing that [is] submitted for consideration... The exclusion of some cultural areas, and inclusion of others, may inadvertently confirm an existing perception of what Asia is (and is not), [but our overall goal is] to encourage breadth and foster further investigation (Brunt 2011: 104).

With this in mind, *Perfect Beat* aims to publish articles that contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the many and varied genres and scenes existing within Asia, and the historical, political and cultural contexts from which they have emerged.

The journal's revised scope also reflects the contemporary reimagining of what can be deemed 'the Pacific', without constraints from geopolitical lines. The Asia-Pacific region now emphasizes interconnectivity, mobility and change and accepts that cross-cultural flows (and enquiry) are not limited to West–Other relations and dimensions. Our new focus also contributes to the ongoing contestation of conventional disciplinary silos, which is a task the journal's previous editors have embraced with conviction.

## A new team

The scholarly expertise of our new team informs the journal's focus on the Asia-Pacific region. Our specialities collectively include music from across Asia (specifically Japan), the Pacific (specifically Papua New Guinea and New Zealand), as well as Australia. Additionally, our institutional affiliations, for the first time in *Perfect Beat*'s history, are trans-Tasman, with editor Shelley Brunt and reviews editor Catherine Strong based in Melbourne, Australia, and assistant editor Oli Wilson based in Dunedin, New Zealand. By way of proper introduction, we include the following biographies of the team:

Executive editor Professor Mark Evans is Head of the School of Communication at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has maintained an enduring relationship with *Perfect Beat*, as co-editor with Philip Hayward (1997–1999; 2001–2003), Karl Neuenfeldt (1999–2001) and, most recently, as outgoing co-editor with Denis Crowdy (2004–2014). He is series editor for *Genre, Music and Sound* (Equinox Publishing) and is currently editor for *The International Encyclopedia of Film Music and Sound*.

Editor Shelley Brunt is Senior Lecturer in Music and Media, and node leader at the Digital Ethnography Research Centre, at RMIT University, Australia. Her teaching and research interests are in the field of ethnomusicology, with a focus on expressions of identity and culture in the popular musics of Australasia. Shelley has produced a number of publications on Japanese music, and Asian performing arts in New Zealand. Recent studies include a co-authored examination of an interactive digital Indonesian musical instrument in sustaining music cultures, and analyses of nation-building in a televised Japanese song context, and music festivals in New Zealand. From 2008–2014, Shelley was the reviews editor for *Perfect Beat*. Her current projects include a special issue for the Japanese studies journal *New Voices* and a co-edited book about the relationship between popular music and cities in Australia and New Zealand (forthcoming Routledge).

Assistant editor Oli Wilson is a lecturer in the Department of Music at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand. His research focus is the recording industry in Papua New Guinea, where he has been undertaking ethnographic fieldwork regularly since 2008. His other interests include New Zealand popular music, the music industry, and recording and studio production, which he explores through both creative practice and scholarly enquiry. Oli is also a performer, notably with the band The Chills, whose influence has been explored in previous *Perfect Beat* publications, prior to his inclusion in the band (see Mitchell 2009).

Reviews editor Catherine Strong lectures in the Music Industry programme at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She completed her PhD in Sociology at the Australian National University in 2008, and since then has also worked at Monash University in Melbourne and Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. She has published a monograph, *Grunge: Popular Music and Memory* (Ashgate, 2011), and has a forthcoming collection, *Death and the Rock Star* (Ashgate, 2015, co-edited with Barbara Lebrun), as well as articles in the *Journal of Popular Culture* and *Perfect Beat*, and a number of book chapters. Her research deals with various aspects of memory, heritage, nostalgia and gender in rock music, popular culture and the media. She is currently Chair of the Australia–New Zealand branch of IASPM.

The success and longevity of a journal can be attributed to several elements, such as financial or institutional support, but it is the dedication and drive of its editors that really makes a journal shine. We are fortunate to have strong relationships with past editors of *Perfect Beat* to help us transition into these new roles. Special thanks must be given to Philip Hayward, who was sole editor from 1992 to 1997, as well as Denis Crowdy and Mark Evans, who have faithfully served as editors for the last ten years and have ushered *Perfect Beat* into this new era. We are grateful for this opportunity and thankful for their encouragement and support.

We would like to acknowledge the dedicated service of the editorial board over the last few years. As part of our 'new beat', we have instigated a slight 'refreshing' of the editorial board: it now includes more women and there will be a turnover of membership every three years (with a possibility for renewal) to allow for a variety of expertise and new perspectives. A list of editorial board members can be found on the journal's website (<http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/PB/about/editorialTeam>) and before the table of contents in the print journal.

## A new issue

*Perfect Beat* has long embraced diverse methodological and theoretical approaches and we continue this tradition in the current issue. By coincidence, Oli Wilson and Catherine Strong both have contributions in this edition. These were submitted, independently reviewed and accepted for the journal several months before Wilson and Strong were appointed to the editorial team. In general, the journal's policy is not to accept article submissions from current editors.

Our issue begins with an article by the journal's founding editor. The DVD *Vanuatu Women's Water Music* serves as the focal point for Philip Hayward's study, in which he applies an emerging conceptual framework in Island Studies that positions some island societies as inhabiting an *aquapelago*—a term that encapsulates the conceptual connectivity, or *aquapelagic assemblage*, as Hayward describes it, between land and marine environments. The analytical focus of Hayward's article concerns the background production context of the DVD, with an emphasis on community livelihood and cultural transition, as well as its representation of the Leweton community's liquid percussion practice in its traditional context.

The complexity of music's capacity for socio-political advocacy is explored by Andrew Hurley, who examines a performance by the Indigenous Australian group No Fixed Address at the East German Festival of Political Song in 1988. The performance is noteworthy due to the performance's location and political context, whereby the East German State permitted the articulation of genocide and colonialism and their legacies in the Australian context. By drawing on media reports and other secondary historical sources, Hurley presents an insightful and thought-provoking account that highlights the ambiguities involved in the politicization of music, especially in international space.

Catherine Strong's article examines how women are included or, as she argues, mostly excluded from the collective memory of Australian rock music. Strong focuses on the cultural and media materials surrounding the death of singer, songwriter and actress Chrissy Amphlett, who was best known as the controversial frontperson for the band Divinyls. Strong examines Amphlett's positioning in

Australian's rock canon, which is representative of the way woman in rock music are more broadly defined by gender and sexuality (among other elements), rather than their musical ability or achievements.

This issue also features a 'Riff' article: a space for authors to present smaller discussion pieces or interviews with key figures. In this Riff, assistant editor Oli Wilson engages in dialogue with Tiki Taane, one of New Zealand's most celebrated musicians. In addition to writing and performing music, Taane has contributed to the success of a considerable number of well-known New Zealand artists from a broad range of styles, including indie rock, metal and reggae. Taane highlights the fluidity of contemporary musical representations of Māori culture and identity in his music and, in doing so, provides new perspectives on the reported relationship between indigeneity and specific 'black-transnational' popular music styles in New Zealand.

We also present a series of reviews of significant music publications that extend beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Norman Meehan reviews Duncan Heining's *Trad Dads, Dirty Boppers and Free Fusioners: British Jazz, 1960–1975*; Anne Danielsen reviews John Scannell's book *James Brown*; and Bruce Johnson reviews Karl Neuenfeldt's *Steady Steady: The Life and Music of Seaman Dan*.

## A new future

As editors, we are highly conscious of academia's changing political context, where the role and perceived value of scholarly research—particularly in the arts and humanities—is increasingly scrutinized. With this in mind, we view our appointment to this journal as an opportunity to act as advocates for our fields. Our primary objective is to continue to build upon this journal's high academic standards and we will do this by continuing to publish outstanding research of international significance. We use a blind peer-review process for all articles. Our publisher, Equinox, also adopts sound ethical practice and upholds the standards set forth in the COPE code of practice ([www.publicationethics.org](http://www.publicationethics.org)), as do all contributing parties to *Perfect Beat* (author, editor, reviewer, etc.).

An immediate challenge we face is the changing technological landscape through which information is globally disseminated. Choosing to view these changes as an opportunity, we very much look forward to working with Equinox to investigate and develop new methods of publishing popular music scholarship. Our vision of *Perfect Beat's* future involves direct hyperlinks, online multimedia components to enhance articles, reviews of audio-visual music events, and more.

Finally, we warmly invite scholars from all around the world who are researching Asia-Pacific topics to submit their articles to *Perfect Beat*. We are also keen to see proposals for special issues of the journal, to be compiled and edited by guests,

and contributions to our reviews section. We hope you enjoy our first issue with the new editorial team.

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