SUPPLEMENTAL MEDIA for “The Sublime Frequencies of New Old Media” (Public Culture, Fall 2011)

Sublime Frequencies has issued about 70 CDs, LPs, and DVDs, some of which are available for mail order and digital download at Forced Exposure. In addition to radio and field recording mixes (for example, “Hyderabad Fidelity” from Radio India and “Rubber Television” from Night Recordings from Ball), historical compilations, and documentary films (for example, the trailer and an excerpt from Sumatran Folk Cinema by Alan Bishop and Mark Gergis, and the clip described in the essay from Hisham Mayet’s Jemaa El-Fna: Morocco’s Rendezvous of the Dead), the label has released material by contemporary individual performers, and has recently organized European and US tours for Group Doueh and Omar Souleyman (whose 2011 remix of Bjork’s “Crystalline” is here). In addition to Awesome Tapes from Africa, many other notable MP3 blogs redistribute regional popular music recordings via open file-hosting sites, including Madrotter, Africolombia, Monrakplengthai, and Holy Warbles, for starters. A few, such as Analog Africa, sahel sounds, and Voodoo Funk, also release physical media, often in the form of compilations like Music from Saharan Cellphones, Vol 1 and Lagos Disco Inferno. This last example inspired an online debate about the licensing practices of Voodoo Funk’s proprietor, NYC-based DJ Frank “Conakry” Gossner, whose record-collecting expeditions in West Africa became part of a broad critique of “crate-digging” as a neo-colonial practice. Other blogs, such as the crucial wayne&wax, Norient, and Mudd Up!, represent an emerging online literature on World Music 2.0 and global circulations of popular music.

Parallel World’s initial 1996 Cambodian Rocks CD has inspired several official and unofficial reissues, including a series of spin-off compilations that borrowed the title. The provenance of the original tracks has now been widely documented by online commentators, such as the contributors to this thread on WFMU’s Beware of the Blog. The recordings led to a documentary and a biopic about the Phnom Penh music scene under the Khmer Rouge, and inspired the formation of Dengue Fever, who are renowned for their version of Ros Sereysothea’s famous track “Chnam Oun Dop Pram Muy” (“I’m Sixteen”) (listed as “A2” on the Cambodian Rocks CD). In addition to their 2005 tour of Cambodia (documented in Sleepwalking through the Mekong), the group performs regularly in the United States, and has contributed to TV and film soundtracks (including a Khmer-language cover of Judy Collins’ “Both Sides Now” for City of Ghosts). In Phnom Penh, The Cambodian Space Project, fronted by singer Srey Thy, plays classic Cambodian rock for local audiences and tourists; see also The Documentation Center of Cambodia, an archival media project to shed light on the Khmer Rouge Era.

Konono No. 1’s 2005 album Congotronics, produced by Vincent Kenis for the Belgian label Crammed Discs, was another major flashpoint for World Music 2.0 listeners. The album has inspired remixes by global artists, including Belgian-Congolese rapper Baloji, who recorded much of his 2010 album Kinshasa Succursale in Kinshasa, and Bjork. In 2010, Crammed Disc released Tradi-Mods vs. Rockers, a two-volume set of Congotronics material reworked by experimental indie musicians like Oneida and Eye. The album inspired a Congotronics vs. Rockers concert tour that brought ten Congolese musicians from together with ten indie rock musicians for a 2011 tour of Europe and the United States (a documentary of the tour is currently in the works).