

# 'Our home, our land ... something to sing about': an indigenous music recording as identity narrative

Karl Neuenfeldt and Kathleen Oien

Identity is no museum piece sitting stock-still in a display case, but rather the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life  
(Galeano 1991: 125).

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives  
(Frith 1996: 124).

## Introduction

In his introduction to the volume *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996) Stuart Hall rejects the essentialistic view of cultural identity as a collective or 'true' self, fixed within a unified community of shared history and ancestry. Rather, Hall says, identities are 'never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions' (1996: 4). Further, he observes, 'precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies' (Hall 1996: 4). Thus an identity construction enunciated through artistic expression such as music contributes to the production and maintenance of a cultural discourse, while simultaneously residing within it. Or, as Frith puts it, music 'describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind' (1996: 109).

This analysis focuses on how identity is constructed within and through the textual and cultural production of a CD recording, examining process as well as end-product. The 'enunciative strategies' utilised in this identity construction are drawn from four kinds of artistic expression: song lyrics, promotional and informational materials, interviews and public sphere journalism.

The recording *Our home, our land* occupies a particular textual space (Muecke 1992) and constitutes a particular kind of indigenous Australian 'identity narrative' (Martin 1995). It consists of twenty-four predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander songs emphasising the relationship between indigenous peoples and their land. In a sense it provides a socio-cultural and musical soundtrack and memorial following on from two momentous events in the struggle for the recognition and implementation of indigenous Australians' land rights: the 1992 High Court Native Title in Common Law decision (the 'Mabo' Decision) and the 1993 Native Title Act. Its dedication reads 'This CD is dedicated to the Meriam people and the plaintiffs in the *Mabo* case: Eddie (Koiki) Mabo, Father Dave Passi, James Rice, Celuia Mapo Salee, and Sam Passi'. The recording was released in 1995 under the auspices of The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia (NIMAA), and the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA). CAAMA is based in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory and has a record company with a large catalogue of indigenous artists, comprehensive distribution networks, and a state-of-the-art recording studio. The recording presents different musical styles performed by diverse indigenous and non-indigenous, female and male, group and solo artists from across the nation.

The recording's variety highlights three important factors underlying this analysis: there are multiple indigenous (and non-indigenous) identities in Australia; indigenous identities as constructed and produced within popular music discourse are often collaborative, and sometimes contentious; and the recording and the individual indigenous songs are self-representations, albeit presented within a predominantly Western popular music aesthetic. Notwithstanding the recording's multiplicity of identities, collaborative and contentious nature, and claims to self-representation, the songs revolve around a recurrent trope in the discourse of identity for both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians: the relationship between the past, space and culture.

### The notion of identity narratives

There is a particularly useful perspective which aids in understanding the recording and its songs as unique discursive and enunciative examples of indigenous musical artistic expression. Martin's (1995) analysis of 'the choices of identity' seeks to understand how identity is produced and constructed as a narrative by key individuals and groups. It can be usefully extrapolated to examine in this instance a music-mediated identity narrative as a textual production designed to memorialise a particular period and particular events in Australian history.<sup>1</sup>

According to Martin (1995), the goal of identity narratives is to encourage positive change in a group's access to power and its individuals' life-chances. This is accomplished by fashioning a different (often counter-hegemonic) discourse in response to a dominant discourse in two main ways: the selection of particular cultural traits; and the emancipation of amnesia (the active un-forgetting and un-silencing of what has been forgotten or silenced). Identity narratives are often devised and directed 'in order to create and mobilize [groups] towards the attainment of particular political goals' (Martin 1995: 5). Martin cautions however they should not be reduced simplistically to 'expressions of social homogeneity or representations of immutable realities' (1995: 7). He con-

1. See Boyer (1990) for reflections on different modes and types of memory (short-term, long-term, and flashbacks), as well particularly valuable insights on what constitutes 'tradition' (the repetition or reiteration of facets of particular phenomena via social interaction).

tends identity is about neither homogeneity nor permanence, and citizens usually have either a choice of identity narratives or the option to refuse them all together. The identity narratives on offer at any one time remain in flux and open to negotiation and contestation although often presented and defended as unchanging and sacrosanct.

There are three key 'pillars' of identity narratives which may ebb and flow in influence or relevance but are commonplace. Martin identifies these as relationships with the past, space and culture.<sup>2</sup> In respect to the past, Martin observes: 'Collective memories frequently have special chapters for traumatic events, that is real or imagined events the relation of which in the identity narrative confers them a particular weight (sometimes in glory, more usually in horror)' (1995: 12). Attitudes and behaviour in the present are often explained and legitimated by reference to traumatic events in the past.

In respect to space, Martin asserts it appears in the narratives as 'the place where the necessities of life are available; where communities are able to sustain themselves and reproduce themselves, and have been doing so for a long time' (1995: 12). Importantly, it is a place where power is wielded in a particular way by particular people. As well, space is a place where a particular pattern of sociality prevails, and where customs thought to constitute 'a good life' (such as music, dance and story telling) are not only accepted but encouraged.

In respect to culture, Martin suggests the selected traits 'are frequently related to practices that gave the milieux where individuals grew up a particular flavour, and carry a strong affective load' (1995: 13). This selective affectivity is at the expense of other traits which – for whatever reasons – are judged peripheral to current socio-cultural or political conditions and ambitions. An essential component of identity narratives is choosing emblems which embody or symbolise group cohesiveness and uniqueness. Martin maintains: 'relationship to time helps to make these emblems look perennial; relationship to space offers them a field in which they can be displayed' (1995: 13). Identity narratives can transform cultures by the selection, valorisation, and mythologisation of particular traits and artefacts. Martin also maintains poets as culture brokers, of which songwriters/musicians are a particular type, are among the key individuals whom a group calls on 'to preach the gospel of identity' (1995:11), proclaiming not only that a group is unique but also that its history and its members' abilities and endeavours must be asserted and defended.

Finally, Martin argues identities in and of themselves do not exist. Rather, they are produced and constructed in and by means of identity narratives. The identities of individuals and groups are imagined through the discursive and enunciative process of narrativisation, albeit often with demonstrably invented yet fiercely defended socio-cultural, aesthetic, and political boundaries. In summary, Martin states: 'the identity narrative channels political emotions so that they can fuel efforts to modify a balance of power; it transforms the perceptions of the past and of the present; it changes the organization of human groups and creates new ones; it alters cultures by emphasizing certain traits and skewing their meanings and logic' (1995: 13). Overall, an identity narrative

---

<sup>2</sup> Martin's uses of the terms 'past', 'space' and 'place' are distinctive but can be extrapolated to the indigenous Australian context in general terms if noted they are contingent terms open to interpretation.

strives to engender a fresh interpretation of the world in order to change it. Indigenous popular music in Australia provides a compelling example of how such a narrative can be imagined (and maintained) through music.

### Music, identity and Indigenous popular music

Before examining specifically how *Our home, our land* produces and constructs an identity narrative, it is useful to note briefly in broad terms the relationship between music, identity and indigenous popular music. Seeger notes: 'music is one of the ways that communities establish themselves and try to survive; music is also one of the tools other people use to try to dominate them. Whatever is happening, music is often serious as well as beautiful, urgent as well as transcendent' (1997: 22). Frith argues music and identity are inextricably entwined. He maintains it is not how a people is reflected in a particular piece of music or a performance which is most relevant but the reverse. The total experience of music – both hearing and literally feeling it – can only make sense if understood by social actors as constituting both a subjective and collective identity. For Frith, this conjoined subjective and collective identity pivots on two premises: 'identity is *mobile*, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being; [and], our experience of music – of music making and music listening – is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*' (1996: 109). Thus music and identity are both simultaneously performance and narrative, highlighting the dialectic relationship between the social and the individual. Frith believes because of music's mutability, affectivity and ease of dissemination, it is the cultural form best suited to cross boundaries. It can not only help redefine the past but also help define space and culture in the present.

The role of indigenous popular music in shaping identity for indigenous and non-indigenous Australians has been explored by a range of writers. There are music orientated works which contribute particular perspectives on the music, songs, videos, personalities and politics of a commercially small but culturally and creatively important genre.<sup>3</sup> As well, there are literature orientated works which help locate the emergence of indigenous popular music within the wider discourse of post-colonial writing.<sup>4</sup> In the context of indigenous popular music recordings as a unit of analysis, Dunbar-Hall (1997b:38–9) provides a particularly germane perspective: 'The album [is] a composite statement to which individual songs are contributing elements ... songs, while still capable of signifying at their own level, assume wider meanings from an understanding of their positions and roles in larger structures. At the same time, meanings of those larger structures are the result of the contributions of their contents and the relationships between those contents'. The relationship between music, identity and indigenous popular music, as in other genres, is determined by the provisional and unpredictable interaction of social actors, processes and end-products. The music, songs, personalities and politics of *Our home, our land* analysed below provide cogent examples of how indigenous (and non-indigenous) identity is narrativised within an

<sup>3</sup> See Breen 1988, Castles 1992, Dunbar-Hall 1997a, Gibson 1998, Gibson and Dunbar-Hall 2000, Hayward 1992, Lawe-Davies 1989 and 1993, Magowan 1994 and 1996, Mitchell 1993, Neuenfeldt 1996 and 1997, Shoemaker 1994a,b, Streit-Warburton 1995, Ryan 1994, Stubington and Dunbar-Hall 1994 and Webb 1987.

<sup>4</sup> See Ashcroft et al. 1993, Hodge and Mishra 1991, Mudrooroo 1997 and Narogin 1990.

unique musical discourse and textual production and explicitly and implicitly around the 'key pillars' of past, space, and culture.

### **Analysis and discussion of *Our home, our land***

The recording *Our home, our land* originated from ATSIC's initial idea to commission a single song about native title and land rights, performed by a number of well-known indigenous artists. Eventually it was decided an entire compilation recording would be produced, and would include a commissioned main (title) song; licensed tracks already recorded elsewhere by well-known indigenous and non-indigenous artists; and new songs from indigenous artists not previously recorded. The last were chosen within the format of a song contest, by a panel of judges from ATSIC, NIMAA, and CAAMA.

According to Richard Micallef (1997), former CAAMA music manager and executive producer of *Our home, our land*, the main objective of the project was one of communication, not commercial viability, although ATSIC and CAAMA, as the two main producers of the recording, had different communicative aims. ATSIC intended the recording and its accompanying cover-notes to present information on the Native Title Act, the Indigenous Land Fund and current social justice measures (ATSIC 1995: 12), and encouraged people to seek further information (telephone numbers for ATSIC's Office of Public Affairs and the Indigenous Land Corporation were included in the cover-notes). CAAMA, on the other hand, felt its ultimate objective was the production of a high quality recording to be broadcast primarily to indigenous communities. In doing so, it hoped to encourage the role of indigenous media as a source of information about indigenous cultural events (e.g. the song contest); to inspire other indigenous songwriters and musicians to write and record; and to inspire indigenous media organisations, large and small, to follow CAAMA's lead in developing music production from its broadcasting service, thus increasing the number of independent indigenous music labels around the country.

Micallef acknowledges *Our Home, Our Land* has not been an outstanding commercial success. This, he says, is due to several factors. There is a tendency for indigenous products to be compartmentalised, and receive recognition and airplay primarily with alternative or marginalised broadcasters. The music industry is fashion-based, and few if any of the songs on the recording fit easily into an AM radio commercial broadcasting niche. As well, CAAMA's 'remote' location (Alice Springs) means: 'no amount of national promotion is enough in an in-your-face industry like popular music if you are not based in Melbourne or Sydney' (Micallef 1997).

The lack of indigenous representation in the mainstream media (Bostock 1996; Goodall et al. 1994; Langton 1993) not only contributes to marginalisation of indigenous expressive culture; it also limits indigenous voices within the hegemonic discourse. Indigenous constructions of identity narratives inevitably become counter-hegemonic, because they are placed in 'political' or 'ethnic' slots within the mainstream. They may be further distorted by broadcasters who cull from these narratives, utilising them to manipulate current mainstream biases. For example, one of the songs appearing on *Our Home, Our Land* is 'Original Aboriginal'. It was written and performed by song contest winner Dave Quinlan, who was in Long Bay Gaol in Sydney, New South Wales, at the time of production. Because he was not allowed to leave the gaol for a day to record in a studio, CAAMA arranged for recording engineers and producers to come into the gaol

and record Quinlan there. Media commentator and entrepreneur John Laws used this as an opportunity to attack ATSIC for what he saw as an irresponsible use of funds: 'But when Quinlan won, with a song called Original Aboriginal, it was decided the recording studio would go to him. And it did. At enormous expense, I'm sure. So, thanks to ATSIC, the criminal got his day of glory and the taxpayer got to pick up the cheque. Nothing surprises me any more about these people' (Laws 1995: 39). Laws repeatedly alleges ATSIC is overfunded, mishandles money, and does not represent the best interests of its constituents. In implying this project's \$100 000 budget is robbing outback indigenous people of crucial medical facilities and supplies, Laws presents himself as a proponent of anti-bureaucratic practicality, and Aborigines as pawns who are being taken advantage of by their own leaders.

Micallef sees irony in Laws' attack, not only because the song in question was, in fact one of the cheapest to produce, but also because ATSIC and CAAMA were aware that recording this song was in line with recommendations of *The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Johnston 1991). Further, the producers felt this negative media attention contributed to the continued marginalisation of indigenous artistic production, because it may have limited the recording's air time on commercial AM radio.

Nonetheless, both ATSIC and CAAMA count *Our Home, Our Land* as a success overall because a number of objectives were achieved. First and most obviously, a high quality recording was produced. Second, the involvement of indigenous media at all stages of the project 'helped to bond the indigenous broadcasting sector for a period of time' and brought 'a unified voice out of disparate communities' (Micallef 1997). Third, Micallef claims the song contest was an inspiration to indigenous musicians nationwide: the producers received 120 entries, and had to narrow them down to the eight which eventually appeared on the recording. These contest winners not only had their songs recorded and produced for appearance on this recording, but came out of the project with high quality master tapes, over which they retained licensing and publication rights.

Micallef stresses the importance of process over end-product in the *Our Home, Our Land* project. He describes initial discussions between ATSIC, NIMAA and CAAMA as 'a tennis match of ideas', and points out the producers preferred a grass-roots approach, which meant extending song contest deadlines, and using indigenous community radio as much as possible to promote the song contest and broadcast the recording. According to Micallef (1997): 'The process of making this album was a sort of identity narrative for the musicians, songwriters, and indigenous radio stations. It gave birth to itself as a beautiful narrative. If you open the doors and say 'come in with your stories', you get all these wonderful stories that give everyone involved a better realisation of what it is to have an entitlement to your land'.

Overall, the recording consists of 24 separate tracks, three of which are versions of the title song. Licensed tracks were solicited from established indigenous and non-indigenous artists including Yothu Yindi, Sunrize Band, Coloured Stone, Christine Anu, Shane Howard, Blackfire, Blekbala Mujik, Warumpi Band, Amunda, Paul Kelly, Kev Carmody, Neil Murray, and the Mills Sisters. Indigenous contributors are linked to particular places or regions; for example, Sunrize Band from Maningrida, the Mills Sisters from Thursday Island, Phil Moncrieff from Western Australia, Minnie Read from South Australia. The title song is noted by its author Lou Bennett as being 'written for all Aus-

tralians. Anyone and everyone who walks on this land needs to know the history, to fully appreciate their home'. Only three of the songs on the recording were actually recorded at CAAMA Studios (the commissioned title song, and two contest winners, 'Angerwuy' and 'Big Mountain Wilpena Pound'), because it was often impossible to get musicians to Alice Springs to record. If recorded away from CAAMA, efforts were made to use indigenous recording facilities.

Although several of the songs refer directly to the Mabo Decision, or are tributes to Eddie Koiki Mabo himself ('Mabo', Yothu Yindi; 'Respect for Eddie Mabo', Rygela Band; 'Koiki, Father Dave and James', Peter Yanada McKenzie; 'Mabo', The Mills Sisters), the rest of the tracks on the recording refer more or less directly to indigenous peoples' relationship with the land, from a range of perspectives. These include: traumatic events in the past ('Forgotten Tribe', Coloured Stone; 'Solid Rock', Shane Howard; 'Stricken Land', Blackfire; 'Angerwuy', Raven; 'We Shall Cry', Warumpi Band; 'Tjapwurrung Country', Neil Murray; and 'This Land's Worth More Than Gold and Silver', Phil Moncrieff); celebration of the victory for land rights ('Land Rights', Sunrize Band; 'Nitmiluk', Blekbalu Mujik; and 'From Little Things Big Things Grow', Paul Kelly/Kev Carmody); people's attachment to their country ('Big Mountain Wilpena Pound', Artoowarapana Band; and 'Nukkanya', Paul Kelly); celebration of indigenous culture ('Kulba Yaday', Christine Anu; 'Yolngu', Frances Williams; 'A Little Drop', Minnie Read; and 'Original Aboriginal', Dave Quinlan); and, indigenous self-determination ('Climbing the Mountain', Amunda). Due to the diversity of artists and thus their diverse community and individual identity affiliations, there is arguably a sense of multiple indigenous identities being acknowledged rather than a monolithic one being constructed. Such diversity reflects to some degree the pre- and post-colonial variability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, which was often ignored when overriding legislation or policies lumped them together. Each community would have had particular relationships to past, space, and culture and music would have helped to articulate and reinforce those relationships.

The fact ATSIC had a particular political agenda – communicating information about native title – and set about creating a 'theme' recording, did not render its artistic production strained or difficult to achieve. Micallef (1997) points out three-quarters of CAAMA bands write songs about land as a matter of course and 'half their songs are about their land and their country'. Given the different communicative aims of the two main producers, it was agreed these two organisations would handle different aspects of media promotion: ATSIC would provide information on Native Title and land rights issues, and CAAMA would focus on the logistics of production, the implementation of the song contest, and the recording process and participation of the artists.

*Our Home, Our Land's* title song is featured three times, at the beginning, middle and end of the recording. Although the song lyrics do not deal with native title or land rights issues specifically, they set the general themes for the recording: indigenous people's connection to the land and the interplay of past, space, and culture. The appearance of three different versions of the song provides a physical framework for the recording, as well as a thread of continuity throughout it.

The placement of these three tracks illustrates the balance and tension between the political, artistic and cultural agendas in this project. The first version (track 1) sets the

tone for the recording as a whole: a large collaborative effort. It was recorded at CAAMA Studios in Alice Springs by songwriter Lou Bennett of Tiddas, along with a number of other well-known indigenous and non-indigenous artists, including Sally Dastey and Amy Saunders of Tiddas, Kev Carmody, Archie Roach, Ruby Hunter, Bart Willoughby, Buna Lawrie, Sammy Butcher, Shane Howard and David Bridie. Although the lyrics contain a political message ('Now you're listening not just hearing the tears/ Of a people who've been shouting out for years'), the relatively slow-paced, relaxed performance, use of acoustic guitars, and vocal harmonies create an atmosphere of calm but optimistic political and artistic accord.

The second version of the song (track 10) is more overtly political: the instrumental background is overdubbed with excerpts from speeches made by plaintiffs in the Mabo case (including Eddie Koiki Mabo himself), Lois (Lowitja) O'Donoghue, former ATSIC Chair, and former Prime Minister Paul Keating. Micallef mentions he was initially reluctant to include these speeches on the recording – particularly Keating's, in which he admits European Australians were responsible for murdering and discriminating against indigenous people – because of their political overtones: 'After all, this is supposed to be an artistic production, not out and out propaganda ... We're a creative company, we want to talk to people through emotions. Now I'm really happy it's there [referring to Keating's speech], because . . . it marks the high point of Aboriginal reconciliation in Australia' (Micallef 1997).

The third version of the title song (track 24), appearing at the end of the recording, can be seen as the most 'culturally traditional' of the three versions. According to Micallef, Buna Lawrie (of Coloured Stone) was inspired during the process of recording the original song, to translate Bennett's lyrics into *Yirgala Mirning*, an Aboriginal language spoken in South Australia. Lawrie performs this version solo, to the accompaniment of didjeridu and clapsticks.<sup>5</sup>

This song is emblematic not only of the recording as an end-product, but also the process of its production, which from inception to composition to recording is represented as an organic movement, culminating in the establishment of an holistic identity narrative. Micallef points out Lou Bennett, when approached by ATSIC and CAAMA, said she was already thinking of writing a song 'about land', and produced a demo tape with guitar and voice within three weeks of being commissioned. Musicians and producers were flown to Alice Springs to record the song at CAAMA studios for three days, and according to Micallef, the producers changed Bennett's original song very little, other than to bring in more performers. Micallef (1997) describes those three days as very positive, because the musicians and producers knew they were in an indigenous facility: 'singing and writing and being creative ... as part of a team. What was really important was gathering the people together: the process, rather than the product'.

Micallef (1997) describes the recording as a 'narrative, an identity package, the whole of which says more than the sum of the parts'. The emphasis on process in the production of this recording resonates with Martin's notion of the past, space and cul-

---

5. Given that the didjeridu was not part of the 'traditional' culture in Lawrie's homeland area in South Australia, its inclusion highlights the mutability of emblems (not just musical ones) employed in identity narratives.

ture as three key 'pillars' of identity narratives. The physical and cultural 'space' of CAAMA studios was felt by the musicians to be a place where they, as indigenous artists, could be culturally sustained and creative: it was a positive space from which a current identity narrative could – and would – flow, weaving together the themes of process, collaboration, and reconciliation.

These themes are highlighted in the recording cover-notes, which include two pages of photos taken during the recording session featuring the various artists involved, and in the eponymous video/documentary featuring the title song, video and documentary being integral formats for promoting indigenous commercial and cultural agendas (Magowan 1996). Shot in the studio during recording (and integrating footage from other sources), this video/documentary is mostly a self-referential piece, described by Micallef as created primarily to document the process of production. Done in black and white, the footage from the recording sessions chronicles musicians and producers, indigenous and non-indigenous, working together. Although performers are shown only within the confines of the studio, they are filmed looking up, and off into the distance, which places the artists beyond those four walls, and onto the 'land' to which the song lyrics refer.

This video illustrates how the words of the song's chorus ('Our home is our land where we stand together') serve as a bridge between the subject of the song and the process of producing an end-product. Further, the 'affective load' in this narrative is one which cements the current creative process with indigenous historical and mythical pasts. Songwriter Lou Bennett comments the song will 'make our old people cry. It's one of those songs that hit you in the heart' (ATSIC 1995: 12), alluding to the suffering of indigenous people in the history of colonial and post-colonial contact. The words of the chorus, 'We sing our home . . . we dance our land . . . where we stand together' refer to traditional indigenous relationships with country – it is not enough just to live on the land, one must continually recreate and maintain it through ceremony, which includes singing and dancing.<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

The wide variety of indigenous identity discourses and identity affiliations revealed on *Our Home Our Land* highlight the complexity and inherent selectivity of deciding not only what is contemporary 'indigenous identity' but also which musical styles might represent it. Arguably the artists reflect the diversity of indigenous cultures and represent particular linkages being made (through different musical genres) to different but not dissimilar notions of past, space, and culture. For example, there are artists from all over Australia and from remote, rural, and urban communities; there are artists who use English as their primary language and others who use it as an additional language; there are seasoned performers and novices. However, there is an underlying notion informing the CD and that is the notion of diverse, non-essentialistic, changeable identities (personal, group, musical) which can collectively be labelled 'indigenous'.

The addition or subtraction of indigenous instrumentation or language does not automatically render one or the other either less or more 'authentic' as an expression of

<sup>6</sup> For comments on the pivotal role of ceremony in re-creation and maintenance see Magowan 1994, Morphy 1991, Clunies Ross et al. 1987, Peterson and Langton 1983.

identity. A stress on diversity helps confound the ever-present (and often highly profitable) caricatures of touristic, political or talk-back radio images of what constitutes a 'real' or 'unreal' indigenous Australian. The songs on the CD may be intensely local in content but they also may be national in context because they highlight commonalities of experiences and aspirations shared by many indigenous Australians. They also may be transnational in the sense of pointing out similarities (in impetus and responses) among other indigenous peoples in settler colonies.

The CD and the processes of its textual and cultural production represent an identity narrative which situates indigenous people in the present, while simultaneously connecting them with their 'past'. Just as indigenous 'traditional' songs are used to 'sing the landscape' of Australia, the songs on this recording are used to sing its 'humanscape'. As a historical document it chronicles a particular time when public debates centred on the nature of ethnicity, race and the nation; notions of cultural affiliation; and the politics of place. In terms of creativity and culture the process of making the CD may well have superseded the end-product in terms of commerce, but that dynamic is also an integral but often overlooked (or misunderstood) aspect of the performance aesthetic.

*Our Home Our Land's* celebration of the recognition and implementation of Native Title in Common Law and land rights achieves a level of poignancy when considered in juxtaposition to the ensuing moves at federal and state/territorial levels to diminish or reverse ground gained. However, rather than attacking dominant discourses which have a history of denigrating or marginalising indigenous voices, this project has inserted its end product into the arena within which these discourses move. The recording arguably achieves its aims to inform people about Native Title, encourage indigenous media organisations, inspire indigenous musicians, and celebrate what has been achieved thus far collectively. It provides an answer to implicit questions permeating contemporary Australian debates about where indigenous voices should be 'located' and how they should be 'heard': not only do those voices belong on the land, which is their home, but they are equally 'at home' within the mainstream.

## References

- Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, Helen, 1993. *The Empire writes back: theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. Routledge, London.
- ATSIC, 1995. 'New CD promotes native title rights.' *ATSIC Reporter* 4(2).
- Bennett, Lou, 1995. *Our home, our land*. Black Heart-Polygram Music Publishing.
- Bostock, Lester, 1996. 'Foreword.' *Australian-Canadian Studies* 14(12): ix-xx.
- Boyer, Pascal, 1990. *Tradition as truth and communication: a cognitive description of traditional discourse*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Breen, Marcus (ed.), 1988. *Our place – our music*. Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Castles, John, 1992. 'Tjurgaringanyi: aboriginal rock', in Hayward, Philip (ed.) *From pop to punk to postmodernism*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, pp 25-39.
- Clunies Ross, Margaret, Donaldson, Tamsin and Wild, Stephen (eds), 1987. *Songs of Aboriginal Australia*. University of Sydney, *Oceania Monograph* 32.

- Dunbar-Hall, Peter, 1997a. 'Site as song — song as site.' *Perfect Beat* 3(3):58–76.
- 1997b. 'Music and meaning: the Aboriginal rock album.' *Australian Aboriginal Studies* (1): 38–47.
- Frith, Simon, 1996. 'Music and identity', in Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul (eds) *Questions of cultural identity*. Sage, London, pp 108–127.
- Galeano, Eduardo, 1991. *The book of embraces*. Norton, New York.
- Gibson, Chris, 1998. "'We sing our home, we dance our land": Indigenous self-determination and contemporary geopolitics in Australian popular music.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 16: 163–84.
- Gibson, Chris and Dunbar-Hall, Peter, 2000. 'Nitmiluk: place and empowerment in Australian Aboriginal popular music.' *Ethnomusicology* 44(1): 39–64.
- Goodall, Heather, Jakubowicz, Andrew, Martin, Jeannie, Mitchell, Tony, Randall, Lois and Seneviratne, Kalinga, 1994. *Racism, ethnicity and the media*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Hall, Stuart, 1996. 'Introduction: who needs identity?', in Hall, Stuart and Du Gay, Paul (eds) *Questions of cultural identity*. Sage, London, pp 1–17.
- Hayward, Philip, 1992. 'Safe, exotic and somewhere else.' *Perfect Beat* 1(2): 33–42.
- Hodge, Bob and Mishra, Vijay, 1991. *Dark side of the dream: Australian literature and the postcolonial mind*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Johnston, Elliott, 1991. *Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody*. AGPS Canberra.
- Langton, Marcia, 1993. *Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television*. Australian Film Commission, Sydney.
- Lawe-Davies, Chris, 1989. 'Looking for signs of style in contemporary Aboriginal music.' *Australian Journal of Communication* 16: 74–86.
- Lawe-Davies, Chris, 1993. 'Aboriginal rock music: space and place', in Bennett, Tony, Frith, Simon, Grossberg, Larry and Turner, Graeme (eds) *Rock and popular music: politics, policies, institutions*. Routledge, London, pp 249–65.
- Laws, John, 1995. 'ATSIC out of tune again.' *Sunday Telegraph* (NSW) 16 July: 39.
- Magowan, Fiona, 1994. "'The land is our marr (essence), it stays forever": the Yothu Yindi relationship in Australian Aboriginal traditional and popular music', in Stokes, Martin (ed.) *Ethnicity, identity and music*. Berg, Oxford, pp 135–55.
- 1996. 'Traditions of the mind or the music video: imagining the imagination in Yothu Yindi's *Tribal Voice*.' *Arena* (7): 99–110.
- Martin, Denis-Constant, 1995. 'The choices of identity'. *Social Identities* 1(1): 5–20.
- Micaleff, Richard, 1997. Interview with Karl Neuenfeldt, Alice Springs, Northern Territory.
- Mitchell, Tony 1993. 'Treaty now! Indigenous music and music television in Australia.' *Media, Culture and Society* 2: 299–308.
- Morphy, Howard, 1991. *Ancestral connections: art and an Aboriginal system of knowledge*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Mudrooroo, 1997. *The Indigenous literature of Australia*. Hyland, Melbourne.
- Muecke, Stephen, 1992. *Textual spaces: Aboriginality and cultural studies*. New South Wales University Press, Sydney.

- Narogin, Mudrooroo, 1990. *Writing from the fringe: a study of modern Aboriginal literature*. Hyland, Melbourne.
- Neuenfeldt, Karl, 1996. 'Songs of survival: ethno-pop music as ethnographic Indigenous media.' *Australian-Canadian Studies* 14(1&2):15-31.
- Neuenfeldt, Karl (ed.), 1997. *The didjeridu: from Arnhem Land to Internet*. John Libbey/ Perfect Beat Publications, Sydney.
- Our home our land* 1995 CAAMA 253 (CD and video/ documentary).
- Peterson, Nicolas and Langton, Marcia (eds), 1983. *Aborigines, land and land rights*. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.
- Ryan, Robin, 1994. 'Tracing the urban songlines: contemporary Koori music in Melbourne.' *Perfect Beat* 2(1): 20-37.
- Seeger, Anthony, 1997. 'Introduction – traditional music in community life: aspects of performance, recordings, and preservation.' *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 20(4): 20-2.
- Shoemaker, Adam, 1994a. 'The politics of Yothu Yindi', in Karen Darien-Smith (ed.) *Working Papers in Australian Studies* (88-96). Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, pp 19-37.
- Shoemaker, Adam, 1994b. 'Selling Yothu Yindi', in Papaellinas, George (ed.) *Republica*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney: 24-40.
- Streit-Warburton, Jill, 1995. 'Craft, raft and lifesaver: Aboriginal women musicians in the contemporary music industry in Australia', in Sakolsky, R and Ho, F (eds) *Sounding off: music as subversion/resistance/revolution*. Automeia, New York, pp 307-19.
- Stubington, Jill and Dunbar-Hall, Peter, 1994. 'Yothu Yindi's 'Treaty' *Ganma* in music.' *Popular Music* 13(3): 243-59.
- Webb, Hugh, 1987. 'The reggae-folk protest: Australian pop music and ideology', in Ruthof, H and Fiske, J (eds) *Literature and popular culture*. Murdoch University, Perth, pp 69-76.