Title: ***Which master's voice? A cautionary tale of cultural and commercial relations with the country of origin***

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My paper draws on some research that I published in provisional form last year, on the neglected subject of Greek recorded sound in Australia (Gauntlett 2003). The relevance this on-going research to the concerns of the conference is first of all that it offers insights into the involvement of Greek-Australians in the economy of their adopted country as traders, consumers and producers of commodified Greek popular culture, and into the relations which they developed with their country of origin in the process. Petro Georgiou referred in the opening session of the conference to the importance of documenting in detail the experience of the early generations of Greek settlers in Australia; trade in Greek gramophone-records is one case where there is far more to the story than meets the eye. One might have expected these relations with the homeland to involve straightforward bilateral trade, and one would have thought that selling records of Greek music to homesick Greeks would have been an unproblematic licence to print money; but for various reasons, this was not the case.

The second point of relevance to the concerns of this conference is the fact that, for all of its initial difficulties, the Australian recording industry eventually pioneered a profit-driven form of multiculturalism long before politicians, academics and institutional culture-brokers harnessed it. The executives of EMI (Australia) are reported to have despised Greek song as "snake-charmer music", but they were not averse to selling recordings of it for profit (Gauntlett 2003: 26). My research gives some insight into the transition from anglocentrism to

multiculturalism in the Australian corporate sector, in response to the need to reap profit from all sectors of the population. Finally my research raises more abstract questions about the mediation or brokerage of Greek culture in Australia. I propose to address all these aspects of Greek recorded sound in Australia again in a book which will provide scope for fuller geographical and chronological coverage of the topic, so I shall be obliged for any feedback on the issues raised. The present publication also gives me another opportunity to repeat my appeal for information from anyone who has Greek records, old or new, with labels bearing the words "made in Australia". All I need for my database is the label details (including the numbers printed on the label or etched in the vinyl or shellac) - please contact E.Gauntlett@latrobe.edu.au.

Nowadays recorded Greek music is one of the ubiquitous items of Greek culture unremarkably present in everyday life in Australia today. The status of Greek music in Australia might be compared to that of Greek food. Greek-Australians and other Australians take the availability of Greek CDs as much for granted as they do the availability of Kalamata olives. But it was not ever thus. The story of how Greek records got on to Australian turntables in commercially significant quantities features some unsung protagonists and feats of entrepreneurial daring; these include linkages between Greek-Australian entrepreneurs and their counterparts in other Greek diaspora communities, aimed at circumventing the colonial triangle which interposed London between Athens and Sydney or Melbourne. The names of entrepreneurs such as George Yiannopoulos (Young), Angelos Roufogallis (Roufos), Costas Zaharopoulos (Zahar), George Bitsis, were once Greek-Australian household-names, as were their establishments (notably "Stanley Young Pty. Ltd." and "The Odeon Music House Pty. Ltd.", both of which had premises in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide) and their commercial insignias ‹ the green and gold "Apollo" label and the rainbow-circled "Z" of the "Z Distributing Pty. Ltd.", a Sydney-based enterprise which distributed records in 26 languages.

However, in order to be fully researched, any project on Greek recorded sound in Australia must take into account the wealth of relevant documents in the corporate archives of EMI, the English parent company of the principal corporate players, not only in Australia, but also in Greece. The Columbia factory in the Athenian suburb of Rizoupolis was in fact run by EMI-appointed British managers from its opening in 1931 to its closure in 1991 (apart from the years of the German Occupation). The Greek concessionnaires of the EMI labels (Kissopoulos, Lambropoulos and Matsas) could be additionally controlled by English headquarters via their dependency on this factory.

The best known of the EMI labels is of course His Master's Voice, known to generations of Greek musicians as "to skylaki" ["the little dog"] because of the well known HMV "dog-and-trumpet" logo. In the title of my paper, the phrase "Which master's voice?" refers in part to the power relations and the assertion of authority which lurk behind that corporate logo, which is as much a symbol of cultural imperialism as is the Union Jack. As for the Australian recorded-sound industry, for much of the twentieth century it was periodically known as the largest per capita market for records in the world after Sweden, and as "an incidental clearing house for foreign product" (Gauntlett 2003: 31). The tone was set by the first records pressed at The Gramophone Company factory at Erskineville, Sydney in January 1926: they were of speeches by the British royal family (Laird 1999: 108-12). The Australian manager reported to London headquarters in 1926: "We, personally, do not think there is a great deal of talent in Australia [...] but it is just the publicity which the Columbia Company would gain by recording here that we would like" (Laird 1999: 124). The amalgamated EMI corporation (with headquarters at Hayes, Middlesex, England) monopolised the Australian market from the formation of EMI in 1931 until the end of the second World War, and continued to dominate the Australian market for decades thereafter, importing thousands of matrices from Britain for local pressing as well as hundreds of thousands of finished records from Britain (Laird 1999: 313). 1931 was also the year in which EMI's Columbia factory in Athens began to

manufacture records, and one might have expected direct commerce between the two branches of the corporation to have been greatly facilitated by that. But alas not. The Empire Preferential Import Tariff meant that it was far more economic to export matrices from Greece to London, to press the records there and then export them to Australia or to export the matrices from London to Australia for local pressing, if the record was likely to be popular. The Empire Preferential Import Tariff was still being invoked as a reason for not importing direct from Greece to Australia as late as 1963 (Gauntlett 2003: 27).

The earliest evidence of Greek records in Australia is possibly a photograph of the Penglis brothers from Castellorizo sitting in their cafe in Tully, North Queensland, with a wind-up gramophone and a pile of 78 rpm records, dated circa 1919 according to Dr. N.G. Pappas, who kindly made the photograph available to me. It is not certain the depicted records are Greek. If they were Greek records, their provenance would also be a matter for speculation. In 1919 it is more likely that they would have been recorded in the Greek community in the USA or Egypt or a city in the Ottoman Empire rather than in Greece, which lagged behind the Greek diaspora in sound recording until the mid-1920s (Pappas 1999: 355).

Greek records were being produced in America by the Victor and Columbia companies from 1907 onwards in sufficient volume to justify publication of a Columbia Catalogue of Greek Records in 1911. At that time Greece was a territory of the Italian branch of the British Gramophone Company, which was most reluctant to send recording technicians to Athens. The Egyptian concessionnaire was similarly reluctant when Greece was subsequently assigned to his territory; he preferred to record in Alexandria, Istanbul or Smyrna. But in the USA the recording companies seem to have appreciated the commercial potential of ethnic minority recordings to a degree which was not attained until very much later in Australia. Moreover, they used American-Greek immigrant artists to perform the songs on records. The problems of

intercontinental shipping during the First World War impeded exports and heightened the need for the recording industry to exploit all sectors of the domestic market fully, including settlers and refugees of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as a number of trade circulars attest ‹ e.g. Columbia USA advised its retailers in 1914: "They are patriotic these foreigners and their intense interest in their own native music is strengthened by their desire that their children brought or born in this new country shall share their love of the old" (Gauntlett 2003: 28-9).

Contrast the attitude expressed in this American document of 1914 with the assimilationist mentality encountered as late as 1962 in a letter from EMI (Australia) to British headquarters: "It should be borne in mind that only the old Greek people continue to buy Greek records [in Australia] and the younger folk, after a short period of assimilation, change their buying habits to English and American recordings. The number of the Greek community in Australia is not a true guide to the market potential that exists" (EMI Archives: Greece 20/6/1962 N.W. Scott to J.M. Bevierre). It is not surprising that in the 1920s when HMV started publishing Australian catalogues, not a single Greek record is listed, even on the "Songs of various nations" pages. Even as late as 1958 the EMI (Australia) Catalogue of Recorded Music does not include a single Greek record in the international section. This suggests that EMI (Australia) could not conceive of any broader Australian interest in Greek music at that time. These were the days before Hatzidakis' "Never on Sunday" and Theodorakis' "Zorba's Dance".

In 1927 the Sydney company John Stilson & Co, importers of goods from Germany, placed an advert in the "Hellenic Herald" (7/7/1927) listing about 70 German-made Polydor records of Greek music as available by mail order. This German intrusion may conceivably have acted as a catalyst to the recognition of market potential on the part of British Gramophone. But it was probably the Depression, which caused the merger of the Gramophone Co./HMV, Columbia

and others into EMI in 1931, that also made the EMI Australian branch more receptive to the needs of Greek-Australians. Thus a note appeared in the 1933 HMV Australian Catalogue that Greek records could be supplied on application to a post office box in Newtown. The content of the recordings includes Greek Orthodox hymns, folk music, arias from an operettas, "amanedes", light popular songs in inter-war Western style, and some examples of what we would now call "rebetika". Many of these recordings were from America, but the records were pressed in Australia from matrices supplied by the English headquarters of EMI in Hayes, Middlesex. One of the records (AP36) carries two songs referring to hashish smoking, under the innocent titles "Uncle John" and "The whole of you" - one wonders what His Majesty's Customs officers would have made of these imported matrices, had they understood the lyrics. The 1933 HMV Australian Catalogue also offers for sale a recording of an address by Eleftherios Venizelos to the Greeks in America, recorded in Greece.

In the 1934 HMV Australian catalogue, four records of Greek song appear, again all performed by Greek-American artistes (Tetos Demetriades, Marika Papagika and George Deligeorge). The same list of four records reappears annually until 1948, with only one change: in 1944 one the Demetriades records is replaced with "Greece will rise again" and the official hymn of the Metaxas National Youth Organisation (DO2599). In 1948 EMI (Australia) underwent a major reorganisation following a visit by the Managing Director of the "English Parent Company", and in 1949 the revamped Australian subsidiary suddenly reports to its English parent both a demand for Greek recordings and a desire to cater for it. The flurry of activity continues in November 1950 with an urgent dispatch from EMI (Australia) to the Columbia factory in Athens of two samples of every native Greek record, both instrumental and vocal, as soon as they are released: "The matter is very urgent as far as we are concerned. Receiving these samples will make it ever so much easier for us in placing our orders with Hayes, Middlesex" (EMI Archives: Greece 20/11/1950 R.L. Willis to The Columbia Graphophone Co. of Greece). At that time sea-freight from Greece took three to four months to

reach Sydney. Adding the time taken to receive samples to that required to consult Hayes, Middlesex and that required for the sea-freight of the finished records or matrices to Sydney, one might might wonder what EMI (Australia) understood by the phrase "very urgent".

One can only assume that Greek-Australians with a taste for the current year's hit-records took advantage of what might be called "informal" opportunities for the importation of records from Greece. At a formal level, in the early 1950s Stanley Young Ltd. was the sole distributor of EMI disks pressed at Homebush throughout Australia. But the Young emporium was soon locked in ferocious competition with Odeon Music House Pty. Ltd., and each set up rival shops in close proximity to each other in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, selling not only records and gramophones, but a wide range of other domestic appliances bearing EMI logos, including His Master's Voice refrigerators and washing machines. It is indicative of his sense of where the real power lay, that George Young regularly took his concerns directly to the English Parent Company, over the head of the Australian subsidiary and visited Hayes, Middlesex, more than once a year when necessary (Gauntlett 2003: 35).

The prospect of EMI's suspension of supplies of Greek records to it in 1958 seems to have prompted the Young Co. to launch its own "Apollo" label, which featured distinctive gold lettering on a green background, a golden bust of the god Apollo, and the catalogue prefix SY (= Stanley Young). About 150 "Apollo" records were manufactured in Australia altogether (mostly 78 rpm), apparently using matrices imported from the USA, where visiting artistes often made cover-recordings of Athenian hits for Greek-American record companies (Gauntlett 2003: 35-6). The "Apollo" label might be seen as an instance of collusion between Greek diaspora entrepreneurs in defiance of local authorities in Australia and of those in Greece, and of their English corporate overlord.

It is worth noting that the Greek-Australians' main interlocutor in Athens was not a Greek, but the Scotsman Robert Mackenzie MBE, who managed the Athens Columbia factory from 1937 to 1968 and was strongly convinced that there was enormous unfulfilled potential for exporting Greek records to the Australian market. The style of his correspondence with company headquarters in Hayes became increasingly agitated and colourful as the issue of direct supply from Athens to retailers in Australia came to a head in 1962, when he estimated that direct sales from Athens could double to 100,000 p.a., given that "first-generation Greek immigrants are avid disc buyers" (EMI Archives: Greece 23/5/1962 R. Mackenzie to G.N Bridge). Mackenzie was told in reply that the "business at the Australian end" was more complicated than he appreciated and current arrangements were claimed to be in the best interests of sales of EMI products other than Greek records - including the HMV fridges and washing-machines. However, by 1963 a newfound belief prevailed in Sydney that the market for Greek records in Australia was set to increase dramatically, and an unprecedented number of orders were placed with the Columbia factory in Greece. In 1965 Mackenzie was informed "that Australia is pressing upwards of 250,000 Greek records p.a.", but he remained unconvinced that the Australian market was being exploited to its full potential, particularly in the marketing of "hit records", and kept petitioning Hayes for arrangements more advantageous to his own particular enterprise (Gauntlett 2003: 37-9).

By the mid-1960s the technological advance from 78 rpm shellac records to 45 rpm microgroove vinyl was well established in Greece. New technology made the dubbing directly from records rather than matrices feasible, and the EMI distributor in Sydney was eventually allowed to arrange for this to be done at the Homebush factory from sample records supplied directly from Athens. By this time Britain was looking to join the European Common Market and would soon relinquish control of preferential trading arrangements with the Commonwealth.

In the 1970s direct exports from Columbia Greece to nominated retailers in Australia, by-passing not only London but even EMI (Australia), appear to be quite routine and are only reported in passing to London. Mackenzie had retired by the time a 1976 report from the Columbia factory in Greece stated that exports to Australia have overtaken those to the whole of North America (EMI Archives: Greece 5/5/1976 J.G. Deacon to J.M. Bevierre).

By this time the rise of cassette-recording and ethnic broadcasting had "democratised" the recording and copying of Greek music, to put it euphemistically. Recording has since been further "democratised" by digital technology. The march of technology has also facilitated the emergence of a local Greek-Australian product, but even today importation continues to form the overwhelmingly main source of Greek recorded sound in Australia. The 2001 General Catalogue of Greek Compact Disks produced by Hellenic Music Distribution (Sydney) boasts no less than 9,000 imported titles and claims to be "the largest and most complete Greek Music Catalogue in the world". Whether the cause of Greek recorded sound in Australia was substantially hindered or advanced by the previously problematic commercial relationship with the old country is a debatable proposition. Direct imports from Greece are arguably not the best way of encouraging local Greek-Australian culture.

Hence the question "Which master's voice?". What about Greek-Australian recorded sound in the sense of recordings made of, by, and for, Greek-Australians? They do not fall directly under the heading of "Relations with the country of origin" for this section of the present conference, so I shall merely report my impression that such recordings form just a tiny portion of the totality of Greek recorded sound in Australia, in keeping with the overall reputation of the record industry in Australia as a "clearing house for foreign product". It is, however, extremely difficult to quantify and document local Greek-Australian recording because of its fragmentation over a large number of small labels, which were often created and then discontinued or revived in an ad hoc manner. My

data led me to surmise that the earliest commercial recordings of Greek-Australian professional musicians dated from the 1960s. However, one of the anonymous referees of this paper has kindly provided me with an alternative line of inquiry in the form of a reference to an apparently successful recording of "Goodbye my love" made in the 1930s (and presumably in English) by Nick Leenos, alias Nikolaos Lianos (Janiszewski & Alexakis 1995: 27). After the War, the jazz-clarinetist Nick Polites featured in mainstream commercial recordings of the 1950s and 1960s (Johnson 1997), as did the guitarists Theo Penglis and James Skiathitis with the 1960s instrumental rock band "The Atlantics" (Petherick 1997). The earliest examples of local Greek-Australian recordings of Greek song known to me are non-commercial "vanity recordings" made soon after World War 2, possibly destined for dispatch back to the country of origin as proof of prosperity, fame or talent. The recording of visiting artistes from Greece appears to have commenced in the 1960s (Gauntlett 2003: 42).

It is a pity that EMI (Australia) "does not keep dead files" (as I was informed by head office at Cremorne), otherwise we might have had valuable information about custom recordings of Greek material which it may have made over the years. We might also have evidence that EMI recorded Greek-Australian artistes on its own labels (apart from Judith Durham of "The Seekers", whose great grandfather was Greek). The independent Melbourne label White and Gillespie or "W & G" published a number of 45 rpm records of Greek-Australian musicians, as did "AWA" of Sydney, but these were custom recordings, not financed by the recording companies. I have described the tale told above as "cautionary" because I believe that it alerts us to the need for a critical awareness of what lies behind the seemingly uncomplicated occurrence of Greek culture as represented in Australia at various points in the community's history. Who would have thought that bilateral trade in commodified culture was really triangular for so long? Or that a Scotsman living in Athens was a lynchpin in the supply of Greek records to Australia? Or that someone in London may have decided that what the Greeks of Australia needed was recordings produced by their American

cousins, including hashish songs, topped up with the Metaxas regime's anthem (three years after the regime's collapse)? Or that Greek-Australians should wait for up to a year for the latest hits from Greece? Or that Greek-Australians needed HMV fridges and cookers more than recent HMV Greek records? Or indeed that Greek-Australians didn't need to hear their own musicians on record, even where the recordings were for the Australian market, as in the case of the Apollo label?

The ultimate criterion for the success of such business-hunches is profitability, but hunches backed up by the power to control availability can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Some may be loath to question the wisdom of the market-place; others decry the interplay of market forces as axiomatically distortional. Provisionally, my main conclusion from this cautionary tale is that studies of Greek culture in Australia need to pay close attention to its mediation or brokerage, not just its seemingly spontaneous production and consumption: who selects what gets presented and how it is promoted, by what qualification or authority, and with what agenda?

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