

## Interview

# Iain Scott - Founder, owner record label Triple Earth

Iain began mail-ordering 'acoustic music from around the world' in 1983, an activity which mutated into the record label Triple Earth 1983, releasing albums from Hukwe Zawose (1985), Cheb Khaled (1986), Najma (1987), Aster Aweke (1989) and many more. else. Project Manager & Consultant for the label sterns music, consultant label manager, director for our price records and musician.

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**WM oasis** -You officially started off as a mail order business specialising in "acoustic music from around the world". How come your interest in the music from others countries?

**Iain Scott** - Through Jazz, I was - still am in some ways - a big jazz fan and if you accept that the most powerful instrument is the human voice, then it's my contention that if you don't understand what that voice is singing about, your ear tends to hear it as if it were, for example, a lead sax.

**WM oasis** - Still many people, even famous artists, disagree about the name "world music". For me that day was a revolutionary day for the "birth" of music from the world that Europe discovered through Cd's and concerts and festivals. Why does this negative point of view still exist?

**Iain Scott** - How long is a piece of string?

**Iain Scott** - I think there are many reasons why a negative viewpoint persists, but in my opinion, foremost among these, is that; essentially, 'world music' is a meaningless term and is therefore open to a whole array of interpretations.

**WM oasis** -How do you see the evolution of world music now?

**Iain Scott** - There are many ways to answer this question. To chose just one:-

The audience is getting older and does not appear to be replenishing itself. However, I don't think you can look at any single audience or music in isolation from what's going on elsewhere in the world. In other words, the reason the audience is not rejuvenating is not necessarily just a function of the music itself.

**WM oasis** -You have been one the first to discover the Ethiopian music via Aster Aweke in 1988. Why you haven't continued to explore and produce that kind of music, which Falcato & Buda music have been developing through Mulatu, Mahmoud Ahmed etc?

**Iain Scott** - In terms of Europe and the West, I was actually the second. Francis had compiled and Crammed had released his 'Ere Mela Mela' selection of Mahmoud Ahmed prior to our

work with Aster. However I guess its right that we were the first to make new recordings that were, if not specifically designed for a Western audience, at least marketed towards them.

**WM oasis** -Why haven't I continued? Aiiieeee!!! That question is too big!

I'm am absolutely content to go on record and say that Aster Aweke is one of the best musicians and artists I've ever worked with. A joy to be with and a true star. As such, I suspect that she knows better than most just how important a real audience is to the performer. An audience who understand what she's singing about, who experience the same things she experiences, and to whom she does not have to explain why she does what she does. At least not in the way that she has to explain things to an audience who doesn't understand her context ... which, by the way, doesn't mean they don't enjoy that music, just that it's bound to have a different impact if the context is different.

**WM oasis** -It is the same with Rai music, your released Cheb Khaled's classic 'Hada Raykoum' and Cheb Mami's 'Prince Of Rai' 1986, which lead the way for Algerian Rai music outside North African communities but you haven't continued developing that music. Instead you have left those artists to be produced by French labels like Barclay, Blue silver. Was it easier for them to be produced in France because of the language and the culture or have you underestimate their ability?

**Iain Scott** - Those releases were company-to-company licences, i.e. I did not have direct contact with the artists until some time after our releases. In fact, while I did later meet Khaled and found him to be a true gentleman, I have never yet met Mami.

Yes, clearly because of language, culture and money (don't forget that!) it was "easier" for them to be produced in France.

An interesting angle is that it can be argued mainstream France didn't really take, for example, Khaled seriously until they saw that we in the Anglophone world were taking him seriously, and I guess I have my part to play in that. However it must be noted that once mainstream France did start taking Khaled seriously, they took to him properly and in a way that the mainstream in the UK & US have never quite managed.

**WM oasis** -Algeria is one of the countries that still have en unexplored music, with many old recordings from Cheikha Remitti, Belkayati and Cheikh Hamada, like it was in Nigeria, Ethiopia or Senegal and Mali. How come no one has got the eye on this interesting music close to Europe, even if it feels far away on the same time?

**Iain Scott** - This is not just one question, but many questions each according to the artist and the circumstances, Anyway these recordings are available, and in today's market they are available at all times paid for or free...

**WM oasis** - Cheikha Remitti died in complete anonymity. How no one of all the English labels haven't think to do something with hear when she was live.

**Iain Scott** - I don't know. It could be one, some or none of the reasons mentioned above. For my part I can only say that, while I enjoy some of her recordings, I can't listen to too many before I have to stop.

I also never got the feeling she was approachable. Not her herself - by all accounts she personally was very open and approachable - but her status. In other words, while she might have died in anonymity (I didn't know that?) it always seemed to me that she was held in such high regard there was no point in a small, independent company even thinking about making an approach because it would be too expensive.

**WM oasis** -According to you, what is the definition of world music except that is the name of a genre of music?

**Iain Scott** - That's the point. It is not a genre of music.

**WM oasis** - Is Gotan Poject, Santana and the Dubliners world music?

**Iain Scott** - It depends entirely on where you are sitting..

**WM oasis** - When the meeting was finished you and the group from the Empress of Russia came with this agreement witch I have read about in the fRoots magazine.

“ Trying to reach a definition of 'WORLD MUSIC' provoked much lengthy discussion and finally It was agreed that it means practically any music that isn't, at present, catered for by its own category e.g.: reggae, jazz, blues, folk. Also, it's not a genre. It's just a label on a box.”

And later he came with this definition.

“Local Music from Out There” first appeared on our cover in November 1988 when we changed out title to fRoots, and has been there ever since”,  
these two meanings. Are they completing each other or have they two different senses

**Iain Scott** - I don't think Ian's is a definition, it's simply a tag he's used for his own magazine and he makes no claims beyond that.

For fun I'm attaching scans from two publications; one a magazine from 1982, the other a programme from 1984, which clearly show that the term 'world music' was in circulation before 1987.



**Iain Scott** Personally, I blame the Swedes! :-)

I'm told, but have no evidence, that an American university ran a 'world music' course sometime in the 1970s.

In the meantime, to add to your collection, here's a scan from a Ghanaian newspaper advertising a gig in Accra in 1976. Note the (misspelt) name at the top of the left column. If you ever wanted to use this publicly, please do let me know because I think it would require permission.

For my part, it was really Don Cherry and his 'Relativity Suite' of 1973 that got me listening to music from outside my own culture, and his connection with Sweden is well-documented.

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Info : source : [http://www.womex.com/virtual/sterns\\_music\\_1/member/iain\\_scott\\_1](http://www.womex.com/virtual/sterns_music_1/member/iain_scott_1)