

Interview

Joe Boyd - Record producer

Joe Boyd started Hannibal record in 1980 which became one of the first important world music label.

Joe Boyd is a record producer and writer in the vintage sense of the term, Joe was the mind behind some of the most fascinating folk rock recordings of the 60s and 70s. His first record production was four tracks by "Eric Clapton and the Powerhouse" 1966. He went on to produce Pink Floyd, Nick Drake, The Incredible String Band, Fairport Convention, Sandy Denny, Richard & Linda Thompson, Maria Muldaur, Toots and the Maytals, REM, Kate & Anna McGarrigle, 10,000 Maniacs, Billy Bragg, Cubanismo, Taj Mahal and many others.



WM Oasis - How come you have get the interest in world music when you started in the 80's the label Hannibal Records-

Joe Boyd - I always liked 'world music' before we called it that. I got stoned and listened to the Koutev Ensemble in 1965, always liked Edith Piaf, Sabicas, Bossa Nova, Hi-Life etc. But when I started Hannibal, I was very slow to release any records, thinking it would be self-indulgent. So I was behind the trend - meeting Marta Sebestyen and Muzsikas in Budapest and going to Bulgaria got me started, also my dear friend Mario Pacheco from Nuevos Medios started releasing nuevo flamenco and I licensed from him, then we co-produced Songhai etc.

WM Oasis - You and some friends have given the name world music to "the other music", music that comes from other places. What does the name world music mean to you, more than the label?

Joe Boyd - Its only meaning is the practical one, a way to separate these recordings from jazz, folk and pop in the record bins.

WM Oasis - The name "world music" have create order in the shelves in the shops around the world, but artists like Ray Lema don't want to classify his music as world but Jazz. In witch shelve you think we should place his music?

Joe Boyd - I have heard many artists complain about a being labelled world music. There is no secret committee which decides such things. Its up to his record company and to the record stores – Should is not an appropriate world here. Perhaps some record companies should start a new category, fusion or something. I would welcome that, so as to separate fusion or something. Un- fused world music from fusion of different cultures. (Most of which, like Ray Lema, I find boring)

WM Oasis - How do you see the evolution of world music today?

Joe Boyd - It is over, sort of. The name will continue because it has practical value. But the audience has been, to a certain degree, educated so if an artist advertised as Tango, people knows what that is rai, vallenata, Hawaiian – There can be more separate categories without the world. I hope

The fashion for mixing cultures and genres will die as well, but I'm afraid it probably won't

WM Oasis - Salif Keita, Fela, Cesaria, Youssou begin to be tired and we don't see any real world music artists doing something new and exciting. What is wrong?

Joe Boyd - Those are such different artists. Keita and Youssou wasted their talent on trying to escape their cultures. Fela and Cesaria did something true to themselves and their heritage, but they are dead. I think there is very little chance of great records appearing in the next decade. The great records were all made when artists were not self conscious about their music, before the west took an interest.

WM Oasis - Rai music from Algeria had its glory days in the 80's and 90's with Khaled, Mami, Zahouania, but seems slow now and no new artists is emerging now. Why do you think it's like that?

Joe Boyd - Most music cultures are stuck now, at least from the point of view of exporting music beyond the home market. Because most developing world cultures crave modernity and the middle class audience for world music wants the opposite. I 'doubt this will changing in the coming years

WM Oasis - How you understand the name Peter Gabriel has given to his label the "Real world", who came 7 years after Hannibal. Does it mean that all music from other labels was not real, except the music he produces himself?

Joe Boyd - I don't think Peter Gabriel means any arrogance with his label name - it just sounds good!

WM Oasis -You have accepted the invitation of Roger Armstrong and Ben Mandelson to the meeting in Empress of Russia. What was your first reaction about the name that has been chosen and was you among those who voted for the name" world music"?

Joe Boyd - I VOTED FOR IT AND THOUGHT IT THE BEST CHOICE

WM Oasis - "Local Music from Out There" is the phrase that Ian Anderson uses to describe world music. This phrase has got many interrogations, what is your opinion about it?

Joe Boyd - I LIKE THIS EXPRESSION

WM Oasis - Have you your own definition about this music, except the description that Ian Anderson proposes to the people?

Joe Boyd - IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE MODEST AIMS OF THE MEETING AND THE NAME – JUST TO PROVIDE A DIVIDER FOR A RECORD STORE BIN. IT WAS NEVER INTENDED TO BECOME A DEEP PHILOSOPHICAL/CATEGORICAL EXPRESSION APPLYING TO ALL MUSIC FROM OUTSIDE THE ANGLO-AMERICAN WORLD. THE WORDS ‘OUT THERE’ MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THIS IS A PHRASE DESIGNED TO BE USED IN COMMUNICATING WITH AMERICAN/EUROPEAN MUSIC CONSUMERS TO MAKE IT EASY FOR THEM TO LOCATE RECORDS.

WM Oasis - Ian Andersson told me recently that "Local music not from here" was just a joke from the Marseille Womex in the late 1990s when somebody was asking "What is World Music in Borneo?" How can you interpret these two sentences that people use to confuse "Local Music from Out There" and "Local music not from here?"

Joe Boyd - THEY SOUND TO ME LIKE THE SAME THING. AGAIN, I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE HEAVY SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHRASE ‘WORLD MUSIC’ HAS BEEN IMPOSED FROM THE OUTSIDE AND WAS NEVER INTENDED BY THOSE WHO INITIATED IT.

WM Oasis - Mali have developed to become the world music meeting point with the "festival du desert", and Mali has developed to be one of the biggest exporters of music this last 15 years. Will the troubles in that country affect the relations between artists who want to see Mali unified and those who are fighting for the independence of Azawad, like Tinariwen?

Joe Boyd - I ALWAYS FOUND THE DESERT FESTIVAL A BIT SILLY WITH ALL THE JAMMING WITH EUROPEAN CELEBRETIES, AND PREFERRED THE FESTIVAL OF THE RIVER NIGER IN SEGOU.

WM Oasis - You have been asked a question by the magazine Billboard about the expression "world music", you replied: *I 'don't like it really. At the time 1987, it was coined to serve a very specific purpose, which was to get a category into record shops.* Do you still have the same opinion or do you think that it was a positive thing that happened in 1987?

Joe Boyd - I THINK IT WAS VERY POSITIVE. SO MANY MUSICIANS HAVE SOLD SO MANY RECORDS AND TOURED THE WORLD UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THIS TERM. THE FINANCIAL EFFECT ON TRADITIONAL MUSICIANS HAS BEEN VERY POSITIVE.

2014 - 07 - 05