

Globalization and commercialization of caribbean music assignment

[Sociology](#)



He is a member of the International Association for the study of popular music (IASPM), a co-producer, an author, a professor and an editorial board member of the journal *Popular Music & Society*, etc. Having created innovative commercial music for television and radio, he has also had interviews with influential artists and producers ranging from members of Public Enemy to renowned record producer Nile Rodgers.

His name is Mike Allen and he specializes in popular music research, where his career emphasis is on the Caribbean, and with this in mind, there is no reason this gentleman with a PhD in English/Cultural Studies wouldn't have his recent work included in *Popular Music History and World Music: Roots & Routes* entitled "Globalization and commercialism's in Caribbean Music" which will be critically reviewed within this essay.

Firstly, The Levin Institute from The State University of New York (SUNY) defines globalization as "a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology" and elaborates that "the process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic well-being and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world." With the latter elaboration in mind, we can further go on to define centralization as offering a product in the market, modernizing it and have it start making the big bills. For example, it's taking a small town kid with singing abilities and turning them into a musical mega-star with the right artist and product development team. These two terms play a vital role in Allen's article as they relate to Caribbean Music. Allen begins his article by expressing how the identification <https://assignbuster.com/globalization-commercialization-of-caribbean-music-assignment/>

of globalization by developing nations have proven to present major challenges and stands as a threat to their continued existence.

In regards to Caribbean popular music, he goes on to mention that “ a central concern of most is distorting the content and representation of the local”. Exactly what does that mean? If one should deduce this statement, it simply boils down to how best to represent your culture in the international market without losing any essence at all but still being attractive to the foreign market. And to agree with Allen, in the recording industry immemorial enthusiasm have often been more about making money than representing culture.

How then can countries from the Caribbean logically represent their music without commercialism’s weakening their art to a point where it becomes “ only a product”? To this date at most times, impossible. The renowned author and professor in his discussion attempts to enlighten us on the “ historical and textual aspects of Anglophone Caribbean music” where he pays particular attention to the reggae era and the marketing of the legendary Bob Marley and speaks of ‘ corporations’ and ‘ authenticity.

He explains that the Caribbean and the exoticism that is associated with it had suffered a great deal of being diluted by music corporations especially the colorful genre such as calypso. Where instead of marketing the genre based on the artistic and cultural strengths it possesses, it is reconfigured to appeal to the larger markets. He goes on to explain that even though the artists of the genre may have yielded from this reconfiguring also known as

commercialism's, the foundation that it is built on is not suitable for career prolonged existence.

Take for instance, Nature a not so affluent young lady desires to purchase a Louis Button leather bag but does not have \$ISSUED to buy it authentically but purchases rather a less authentic version for \$91ST. The knock-off is quite similar to the authentic version but it fails to withstand the time as it is not real leather and is therefore depleted in 3 years, if so much. Even though Nature did get to flaunt her ' Louis Button' bag without anyone guessing it wasn't authentic, it was short-lived.

Should Nature have invested in the authentic one, there would have existed longevity maybe even up to her daughter's 20th birthday! This only boils down to how much and exactly what value is actually seen in and placed on or in a product. Moving along, Allen uses a shocking yet still understandable comparison by referring to the Euro-American's way of taming' Caribbean music as the old-school exploitation of sugar plantations and labor within our Caribbean region. This process only cements the notion that culture and commerce creates conflict.

As he highlights that reggae music subcultures have been developed in different countries other than Jamaica and there exists successful local interpretations such as an album by Twilight Circus from Holland entitled Volcanic Dub (2001). Allen has said that it contains " dub's authentic trademark: organic sonic textures created through progressive remixing accentuated by echo, delay, reverb, various inversions of sound". In agreeing

with the author, one needs to differentiate between music embracing and divorcing the very structure of reggae.

Further into discussion, Allen noted the Pre-Marled Era where 1912 is the year cited for our first international recording of Caribbean Music. Calypso seemingly belonging to Trinidad began to be commercialized in ways that one could not envision. The decades after World War II is the most apparent when it comes to the "American appropriation and commercialism's of calypso". For example, one of the most famous calypso songs "Rum and Coca Cola" depicts the American presence on the island Andrews Sisters.

However, the song was originally published by Lord Invader in a pamphlet in March 1943 but the Barbadian-born arranger of the original version Lionel Balance successfully sued in 1947 for plagiarism (Cooley 1985, 9-28).

Reported to have sold over five million copies in The Andrews Sisters version, lyrics have been altered significantly to appeal to more Western cultures beyond our Caribbean matters. Even another one of Trinidad own Harry Flatten has suffered from diluted Caribbean music due to globalization and centralization.

Allen goes on to discuss the rise of reggae in the article and mentions that Jamaican popular music lacked strength in its identity until the sass along with "critical credibility as an album-based genre until the marketing of The Wailers in the early sass." It is evident that this led to the metallization of Bob Marley, the "genre's first superstar". Even then have Bob suffered by the hands of commercialism's as "I Shot the Sheriff" has been recreated by

Eric Clayton and the “ Catch a Fire” album, once again lacking reggae authenticity to appeal to the wider market.

For instance, Time Magazine declaring Exodus as the “ Best Album of the Century’ over an album such as Legend, Inch can be deduced that Exodus is more appealing to the audience beyond our Caribbean waters. With this in mind, to agree with the author one must ask, exactly how does one distinguish authenticity and if without the capitalist channels used if some of us would even know of our legendary Bob Marley? In the case of Barbados, Allen points out that there has been significant impact regionally but seldom any on the international market until recently.

Historically, one of Barbados most important musical icons is the late Jackie People the developer of a rhythm called spouze, which was scheduled to be their popular music but never flourished due to People’s early passing. Even the band ivory, with intentions to make the band popular they have incorrectly stated to originate from Australia. How tragic. Only until recently have a Barbadian artist (Iranian) achieved major album sales in America Inch began in 2005. Rupee has also been deemed to be a U.

S Chart success but nowhere close to the accomplishments achieved by Iranian. But even then, Airman’s music style does not represent Barbadian musical culture. Allen refers to this case as an example of a” localization of the global, which the text is returned to the primary source of its commercial influence, America. ” The question left to be asked, is there anything that ties Iranian to Barbados? Her first album, Music of the Sun does appeal to the

aura of the Caribbean but that is as far as it goes as there is no evidence in the music.

She has even be incorrectly identified to be Jamaican and in efforts to show her nationality, the Barbarian trident symbol has been placed strategically in her “ If it’s loving that you want” music video. This is as much Barbarian culture that is instilled into the image of Iranian. To conclude, Allen further expresses accomplishments of other Caribbean artists emerging in the world racket but continues to indemnify the challenges faced as centralization plays a major role in Caribbean Music being globalizes.