

Development of african music

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Vampire Weekend- Integrating “ Afro-pop” into Western Indie Rock Culture

For my example of a band inspired by world music, I chose a popular band in western music called Vampire Weekend. The indie rock band’s music has a unique style and rhythm that can be largely attributed to a crossing of global boundaries and the incorporation of African music textures, referencing music styles from Madagascar to the Congo. Ezra Koenig, the lead vocalist, also states that some of their music’s cultural influence include African artists like King Sunny Ade, a Nigerian singer-songwriter, musician, and pioneer of modern world music, as well as Orchestra Baobab, an Afro-Cuban band that originated in Dakar, popular in the late ‘ 70s and early ‘ 80s.

Paul Simon was one of the first well known artists to explore traditional African music, such as Afropop, and fusing it with American popular music. He even wrote his unifying, but also controversial, album, Graceland, in South Africa, after hearing a tape of the culture’s street music. Paul Simon was also one of the main influences for the unique music style that Vampire Weekend eventually created. Both artists portray a unique blend of western rock culture and Africa’s distinct rhythms.

Some of their most known songs include “ A Punk”, “ Oxford Comma”, and “ Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa” are examples of the way the band incorporates African rhythm into their music.

Their music is driven bongo-like, island sounding drums matched with a peppy feel. Bands like Vampire Weekend are extending the music of South

African culture to the American indie rock culture and providing a fusion that highlights one of the many genres of world music.

While some may consider this fusion of cultures to be appropriating those cultures, or that it is unauthentic, I think that borrowing from world music can be a respectful and original way to create new blends, as long as it is done in an honest and mindful way. By this I mean that borrowing music from around the globe, in my opinion, is a reputable way to produce artist's own style, so long as it is done in a way that credits the culture and country it is borrowed from, and in a way that informs and provokes an interest in its audience about cultural music.

Tying this back to sound, setting and significance, I have described the sound of this music as an upbeat and old-fashioned sub-pop melody with African backbeat. To me, the soundscape of this indie band's music is a combination of a layered mashup of instruments, that is signature to the indie genre, artistically contrasted with ethnic drum patterns. This soundscape creates a danceable rhythm and a unique cultural immersion.

The setting is based primarily in the United States, across medium-sized concert venues, particularly in New York city, (the band's hometown), and other urban areas. However, this band's music, as it increases in popularity, is starting to gain audiences from around the globe.

The significance of this sound is that it marks an example of the increasing level of globalization throughout the world, meaning that countries are gaining access to each other's cultural traditions at a quicker rate than ever

before, and this exchange of each cultural identities is continuously growing. This music is also responsible for a fair amount of the South African vibes that are being incorporated into various western music genres, as well as influencing other bands to listen to the music of the world and to become inspired by it. Artists who are inspired by world music are beginning to integrate instruments, sounds, styles, beats, etc. borrowed from foreign cultures into their music, evolving into a diverse blend of sound and a tribute to an emerging style.