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Mixed messages: unsettled cosmopolitanisms in Nepali pop

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This is an age of jazz. This is an age of having long, tangled hair, and of [young men] wearing an earring, and of wearing caps backwards [with the visor in the back]. And it is also a period of rap. Some raps are known as *bhatti* rap and some are known as party rap. And some are meaningless raps. But at this moment it is a time of *deusee* rap. *Deusee* rap!!

Opening rap in 'Deusee rey extended mix' by Brazesh Khanal[1]
(translated from Nepali; underlined words are sung in English)

Throughout Asia, the English word 'mix' (or variant thereof) is being used today to characterise a new mode of musical borrowing and syncretism distinctive of several pop musics that have emerged in the 1990s. Earlier modes of pop music borrowing typically involve timbral, rhythmic and melodic adaptations of both indigenous and foreign materials, in which contrasts between different musical elements are smoothed over so that they can be integrated into unified musical expressions. In contrast, the new 'mix' music of India (Greene 2000, pp. 545–6), Nepal (Greene 1999A; Henderson 1999), Japan (Condry 1999), Indonesia (Wallach 1999) and South Asian diasporic communities (Manuel 1995) employs the latest sound studio technologies in order to reproduce more precisely than ever before the precise timbres, rhythms and tunings of sound bites of both foreign pop and indigenous music. Yet as these foreign and indigenous sounds are coming more sharply into focus in Asian soundscapes, their meanings and histories seem to be going *out* of focus. For one thing, a 'mix' commonly takes the form of a sonic montage: abruptly juxtaposed musical styles heard in rapid succession that project only a weak sense of overarching form. In this 'mix' configuration, foreign and indigenous sounds sometimes present themselves as inscrutable sound bites – snippets detached from their original musical and cultural contexts. Mixes typically celebrate sonic contrasts, rather than attempt to reach or move the listener within any single musical idiom. Moreover, foreign sounds travel to Asia so quickly through radio, music television, recordings and the Internet, that they are detached from their histories and original cultural contexts, and often present themselves as suggestive, intriguing, but underdetermined cultural indexes. This point is taken up below in an analysis of Nepali heavy metal, one of the elements in the mix. Both Western pop and indigenous sounds become perspectival constructs, taking on a range of meanings and affective forces in different listener experiences. Mix music embodies new, understudied and essen-

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tially postmodern musical aesthetics (in the sense of Manuel 1995) that have taken root in Asian and other world communities.

A leading genre of the new sound is the *remix*, which may be defined as a studio-produced reworking of a familiar song, often intended for dancing, in which a vocalist is heard before a shifting backdrop commonly involving several musical styles. In many cases, remixes grow out of live DJ practices (Levine 1998; see also Fikentscher 2000). Remixes became very popular in late 1990s Nepali pop, as did the general mix aesthetic. The urban valleys of the Himalayas became echo chambers in which the precisely reproduced sounds of Nepali folk music, Tibetan *dung chen* music, Hindi and Nepali filmsongs, *Hindusthani* classical, heavy metal, R&B, jazz, reggae, disco, and other musical styles from both Nepal and abroad reverberate and are juxtaposed in studio-produced mixes. For example, the remix quoted above combines passages of rap, hard rock guitar, *lok git* (Nepal's 'folk-popular' music) and folksongs from the Nepali Tihar festival in which young men seek the elders' blessings. 'As people today like to eat mixed *chamal*,[2] so I must offer a mixed sound', a studio musician tells me. Mix music breaks with the three older popular music traditions in Nepal – *adhunik git* ('modern song', see Grandin 1989, pp. 116–19), *lok git* (Ibid., pp. 123–9) and Nepali filmsong (Ibid., pp. 113–15). These genres also integrate many diverse styles but are designed to be organic, smooth integrations.

What does this new 'mixed sound' mean? How does it function in the lives of the young, urban, middle- and upper-class Nepali students who are the primary fans of the music? What do young people think about as they listen to sounds that are unmoored from their histories? I have explored these questions ethnographically through listener experiences in the Kathmandu Valley. I have found that Nepali pop mixes reflect a specifically Nepali condition which relates to the new circumstances in which young Nepalis find themselves today. As they journey toward professional identities they contemplate the many contradictory worlds – both traditional and highly westernised – in which they are expected to live and work in the new urban Nepal. 'Remix' characterises not only their music and their soundscapes, but also the way that they imagine contemporary Nepali urban society.

In Nepal, the mix sound emerged first from sound studios rather than through live disc jockeying. Mix music first became prevalent around 1993, but dance halls ('discotheques') employing live DJs did not become popular in Nepal until late 1996. The more traditional dance practices (such as *banbhoj* and *rodi*)[3] have only recently incorporated music. In 1992, Alesis, a leading producer of sound studio technologies, began to market the ADAT, an affordable eight-track recorder (see Théberge 1997, pp. 248–50), which lowered the cost of multitrack recording technology on the global market. According to Nepali sound engineers, recorders with at least eight tracks are essential technology for manipulating and combining the many sounds that comprise mix music. Within a year there were many new multitrack recording studios in the Kathmandu Valley, and studio production costs began to fall within the budgets of middle- and upper-class students in their teens and twenties. Large numbers of these students began to produce mix music using now-affordable synthesizers, drum machines, ambient effects processors and sound distortion devices. The new, high-tech mix sound became popular, and the leading record companies in the Valley also began to include remixes as a substantial portion of their output.

Part of the meaning of the mix sound therefore has to do with its high-tech nature. To an extent, the mixing *is* the message: the new music involves technol-

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ogies and sound qualities that are new and intriguing in the Kathmandu Valley. Thus, studios are often pictured on album sleeves and some studios have become familiar 'brand names', which helps to sell albums. But the draw of technology alone does not explain the particular form that contemporary high-tech pop has taken, with its abrupt stylistic juxtapositions of traditional and Western sound bites.

Although the new mix sound is self-consciously Western-influenced, it is not accurate to conclude that young Nepalis are trying to recreate a Western society in Nepal. For one thing, listeners voice strong reservations about Western societies, which they associate with crime, drugs and family problems. Further, Nepali pop mixes are eclectic in terms of the Western styles from which they choose to borrow. In the mixed sound are heavy metal, rap, disco, blues guitar, reggae and Latin dance music, but not vocal blues, swing, punk, gospel or country & western, although Nepalis are quite familiar with these sounds through MTV and FM radio. Nepali pop is therefore different from contemporary Chinese popular music, in which one hears more of a rock 'n' roll sound with gritty rhythm & blues vocals, or Indonesian pop, in which one hears jazz or death metal (a particular subgenre of heavy metal) (Wallach 1999).

At first glance, mix music may seem to be a musical compromise – a crossover marketing strategy to capture the interests of diverse listeners. However, I find that there is more to it than that. For one thing, mix music heightens musical contrasts rather than smoothing them over, thus reversing the usual strategy for making a crossover sound. Mix music does not gloss over musical difference; if anything, it *clarifies* the differences and contrasts between the many music genres young people now listen to. Also, as Yubakar Raj Rajkarnikar, editor of Kathmandu's leading pop magazine *Wave*, tells me, 'everyone listens to everything' that becomes popular there: heavy metal, rap, disco, *lok git*, *adhunik git*, Nepali folksongs, and also Hindi pop songs. My own findings corroborate his: mix music cannot be called a musical crossover because the youth market, although culturally diverse, seems not to be comprised of distinct music taste groups.[4]

Since Nepali pop mixes, like American rap music, involve deliberate musical discontinuities, the analytic work of Tricia Rose (1994) is a useful starting model. She proposes that Americans listening to moments of musical discontinuity or 'ruptures' in rap music respond by 'dancing through adversity' – treating rupture as an opportunity for pleasure, self-expression and displaying one's prowess in break-dancing. But young middle- and upper-class urban Nepalis do not share the same general social conditions as the African-Americans and Latin Americans of Rose's study, whose communities and social lives have been ruptured through racist policies and actions. Rather, the Nepali listeners are members of a privileged class, and most have strong ties to their home communities. Moreover, the pop dance craze is quite new in Nepal. My data suggest that Nepali mix music is more drawn into practices of meditative listening than dancing. The music functions as a thought-provoking backdrop for identity-exploration in a changing, cosmopolitan Nepal. My ethnographic research on the meanings of the new mix sound for its listeners is a study of 'imagination as social practice' (Appadurai 1996), in which technology-facilitated imagining is analysed not only as an escapist vehicle of class domination, or as involving the construction of imagined national communities (Anderson 1983), or as a strategy of creative resistance, but also as a general, everyday practice in which a young person continuously constructs and reconstructs the self within an ever-changing plurality of social worlds. Exemplary of the analytical approach I

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take are the ethnographics of Sara Dickey (1989) and Mark Liechty (1995), poststructural anthropologists who have also studied large urban South Asian groups.

My research method involves playing pop songs for listeners and following conversations as they move from musical topics into topics of identity, tradition, youth culture and contemporary Nepal. By using music as an entry point into such discussions, I hope to trace some of the common processes by which listeners, mostly young people, contemplate, find or construct meanings in the music. I have conducted approximately 120 interviews, with an emphasis on students from three schools in the Kathmandu Valley.[5] I have also interviewed musicians, engineers and record company executives, read pop culture magazines and visited restaurants and shopping centres which young people frequent. Young Nepalis are very articulate and interested in describing their reasons for listening to music. I conclude that young listeners contemplate new Nepali cosmopolitanisms in the Western sounds they reinterpret, as well as in other sounds, which resist definitive interpretation by them. Although audibly quite distinct from earlier musics, the new mix music, as experienced by young Nepalis, reinvokes a trope from traditional folklore – the journey or trek – as a means to grapple with new, shifting social conditions.

Kathmandu youth culture

The fan base of Nepali pop is generally urban young people in high school or college – a group which shares certain social and cultural conditions that increasingly separate them from other groups in Nepal today. Nepali pop and Nepali urban youth culture both became distinct formations in the late 1980s and early 1990s, precisely at a time when a disjuncture also emerged between flows of knowledge, technology and music to and from different spheres of cultural life in Nepal (Appadurai 1990). State development programmes have expanded (Pigg 1990), as has transnational commerce generally. With the advent of satellite television, MTV and other Western music programmes have entered many Nepali homes. There has also been a spurt in education which has included an especially strong dose of Western culture and technology. As a result, young students today find themselves in a more Western-influenced, technological world than their elders (Liechty 1995). A similar disjuncture has also emerged between the upper and middle classes on the one hand and the lower classes on the other, since lower-class people generally do not attend these schools. As new technologies of sound production take root in cities, they are immediately drawn into the lucrative urban youth cultures and not into rural music production. In many ways, then, rapid cultural changes starting in, and radiating outward from, cities and urban schools have transformed the lives of upper- and middle-class young people, but have had less effect on their parents and hardly any effect on rural communities or the working class. Western popular music finds more resonance in some segments of Nepali society than others because of different rates of cultural transformation.

At the same time, wealthy parents in Nepal's alpine villages have begun to send their children to urban schools in unprecedented numbers. The cultural diversity of urban campuses has increased, and young Nepalis, unlike their parents, increasingly find themselves interacting not only with members of their own ethnic and caste communities, but also people from Tamang, Gurung, Sherpa, Tibetan, Rai, and many other ethnic and caste communities. Nepal, a Hindu caste-based society with significant internal geographical barriers, has long maintained bound-

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aries between people of different castes and ethnic groups, but this situation has been changing rapidly in urban schools, and young Nepalis increasingly find themselves in a plurality of social worlds.

To be sure, ethnomusicologists are finding that similar disjunctures and broad social processes are emerging in urban youth cultures around the world. But as Appadurai argues, disjunctures take different forms in different cultural settings (1990). Nepali mix music is best understood in relation to a distinctively *Nepali* condition which emerges as the country's traditional cultures encounter new global circumstances. It is beyond the scope of this article to thoroughly describe this contemporary Nepali condition. Instead, this article takes music as an entry point into the concerns and issues facing young Nepalis today, and in this way illuminates both the social functions of mix music and contemporary Nepali youth culture.

Refunctioning Western sounds: heavy metal in Nepali pop

Although Nepali soundscapes are filled with Western sounds, these sounds are taking on different meanings and associations within the Nepali context. This is possibly because the sounds have become detached from their original Western interpretative frameworks and histories. Two short anecdotes from my fieldwork experience should suffice to show this. I spent Christmas Eve of 1998 in the Thamel district of Kathmandu, and found that Nepali merchants observe Christmas by playing recordings of Western rock and pop very loudly on Christmas Eve and all through Christmas Day. The most prominent sounds were the Beatles, Bob Marley and Metallica. If what I would call Christmas music is conspicuous in its absence during a Thamel Christmas, its presence in other contexts is perhaps equally remarkable. I have heard the melody of 'Jingle bells' used as filler music at a hotel telephone switchboard and played over the phone line until a connection is established. No-one operating the switchboard knows the origin of the melody or its original words. In both cases, sounds are detached from their original cultural contexts and frameworks, such that both Christmas and a Christmas melody can be reconstructed quite differently in Nepal and given new meanings. Appadurai (1990) suggests that in the complex currents and cross-currents of today's global cultural flows, some elements travel around the world at a faster rate than others. Sounds travel especially quickly through electronic media, and since 1993 sound studios have allowed Nepalis to immediately and accurately reproduce these sounds in their mix music. But the original meanings, histories and cultural frameworks of these sounds do not travel so quickly, and through this disjuncture new meanings emerge.

As an American ethnomusicologist working in Kathmandu, I found myself continuously struck by new meanings of musical sounds that I felt I already understood. In most Nepali listeners' experiences, reggae does not bring to mind Jamaican Rastafarianism, nor is it heard as rebellious or counter-cultural. Instead, reggae is most commonly used as a persuasive musical setting for seductive love songs. My informants immediately identify rap in Nepali pop, but few are aware that rap was developed in American inner cities or that it originally served as a vehicle of social protest. Many are surprised to learn that rap originated in African-American culture, of which they have various understandings. Remarkably, *all* are surprised to learn that it originated in working-class or lower-class communities. In Nepal, rap

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Figure 1. Advertisement for Cobweb album, Anjaan (Wave *1994*).

is a cosmopolitan, happy dance music which is never, to my knowledge, a vehicle of protest.[6] Although rap and reggae have been adopted by many disenfranchised subcultures (Lipsitz 1997), in Nepal they are generally associated with Western culture, technology and freedom, and specifically with Nepali weddings, discotheques and picnics of middle- and upper-class youths.

Heavy metal is also a relatively new and underdetermined yet now common element of the Kathmandu soundscape. Nepali youths have listened to Western heavy metal avidly since the mid-1980s.[7] They soon began to form heavy metal cover bands, such as Wrathchild, and to perform heavy metal at school functions and public festivities. This performance scene began to dry up in the 1990s, but young electric guitarists continued to practise heavy metal and, starting in 1994 with the band Cobweb, they brought heavy metal guitar sounds into Nepali pop. Although the sounds and imagery of heavy metal are quite accurately reproduced, I find that the music is taking on quite different connotations. In an advertisement for their first album (see Figure 1), Cobweb included imagery typical of Western heavy metal, but departed from the Western model by describing themselves as 'devoted musicians out to conquer your heart' with 'heart winning music'. This advertisement, which marked the emergence of what became Nepal's leading heavy metal band, suggests that heavy metal is taking on nuanced meanings in Nepal. In this case, heavy metal is promoted in much the same manner as sentimental songs or *adhunik git*.

The heavy metal sound functions as a prestige marker, like many elements of Western cultures, especially those involving technology. It is a lifestyle component that marks one as sophisticated and cosmopolitan, much like using English words or wearing Western fashions. But I find that there is more to it than that. I decided to study the meaning of heavy metal sounds in Nepali listeners' experiences. By

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comparing my findings to those of Weinstein (1991), Walser (1993) and Berger (1999) – who study heavy metal generally and guitar distortion specifically – I set out to determine to what extent heavy metal sounds occupy similar semantic spaces in Nepal and in Western musical cultures. I found that heavy metal in Nepal occupies a much broader, and less clearly specified space, and is a vehicle of some markedly different affective experiences. In general, it is about catharsis but not transgression.

Since, as Walser says, 'the most important aural sign of heavy metal is the sound of an extremely distorted electric guitar' (Walser 1993, p. 41), a first step is to determine whether the distorted guitar in Nepali pop is also recognisable as a musical sign to Nepali listeners. I designed a series of listening tests which I conducted on over sixty listeners: I played segments of Nepali remix music, asked listeners to identify shifts in musical style, and asked them to name the musical styles of the segments they heard. I found that heavy metal is indeed easily recognised by most Nepalis, usually by name.[8]

My interviews revealed that heavy metal in Nepal is a music of the upper and middle classes, it is rarely heard as an aggressive sound, and it is almost never heard as a transgressive or 'dangerous' sound. This contrasts with the fact that heavy metal originated in Western working-class contexts (Walser 1993, p. x)[9] and continues to speak to working-class frustrations (Berger 1999, pp. 66–7), although it has also achieved a wider fan base. Further, much of the performative and listening pleasure in Western heavy metal seems to lie in the fact that it offers aggressive experiences of power (Walser 1993, pp. 41–2). Western heavy metal affirms 'identity via opposition' (Berger 1999, p. 265) and, in its exploration of the darker sides of life, can become a rebellious or 'transgressive' voice, challenging dominant identities and institutions (Walser 1993, pp. xvi–xvii). Western guitarists shock established aesthetics by deliberately using heavy distortion, insisting that sounds which had always been heard as 'noise' be reinterpreted as music. As heavy metal appropriates chords, figuration and virtuosity from classical music, it crosses what many listeners feel are the 'sacrosanct boundaries' (Walser 1993, p. xv) of classical music, 'reworking what is now the most prestigious of music discourses to serve the interests of what is now the least prestigious of musical communities' (Ibid.).[10] Further, guitar soloists frequently break out of earlier stylistic conventions, playing at dazzlingly fast speeds and offering louder performances of pitched sounds with broader bandwidths than ever heard before. The power that many Western fans experience in heavy metal is a power to break out of confining musical expectations and limitations – constraints which may be similar to those that they must face in their own social lives. To be sure, in the last decade heavy metal has been fused with more and more musical styles and has acquired some new meanings and functions. But the heavy metal sound has a history as a dangerous, transgressive and empowering music, and this history has not yet been erased.

In Nepal there is no history of hearing heavy metal as transgressive or dangerous. For the most part, listeners laugh when I ask if the distorted guitar makes the musicians sound dangerous. For one thing, although talented Nepali pop guitarists reproduce Western classical elements of heavy metal music fairly accurately, Nepali listeners generally do not recognise the Western classical style in the music.[11] Therefore, heavy metal in Nepali pop *cannot* be heard as transgressively appropriating Western classical music. Further, young Nepalis do not constitute a disempowered group seeking the thrill of transgressive empowerment. Instead, they are members

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of a stable, privileged class. They already have access to the prestige of high culture. As students, they are on professional tracks, seeking empowerment through the approved channels of certification, study and the respect of their social betters. Their dreams, as students, are not to overcome insurmountable barriers, but rather to climb social ladders that are open to them. It is hardly surprising then, that heavy metal in Nepal has no history of association with Satanism (or any other evil spirit).[12] Conversations with young listeners move fairly quickly from the topic of music to critiques of the traditional culture of their families, but I find that these critiques are, for the most part, not counter-cultural or transgressive, but progressive:

> Nepali culture is not good for us. It is old now. We have to change our minds, to develop the country, to fit into the world community. To some extent, traditional Nepal does not fit into the world community. In our way, we are trying to change Nepal to make it better.
>
> (A young man interviewed with his friends at home)

These young people are not rebelling against disempowering social structures. Instead, they generally say that Nepali culture, family structures or gender relations should undergo some kind of change, in order that Nepal be 'more modern', 'more technological' or 'fit into the world community' (compare this to Berger's portrait of an Ohio metalhead and musician: Berger 1999, pp. 261–75).

Whereas determining some of the meanings of heavy metal that have *not* travelled to Nepal is fairly easy, determining what the sounds *do* mean is more difficult. I find that heavy metal is experienced as intense emotional expression, but it invokes a wider range of emotional responses in Nepal than in Western cultures. In Nepali pop as a whole, one hears the heavy metal guitar employed successfully to express or intensify expression of a wide range of emotions, including sorrow, grief, anger and joy.[13]

> *PG: How does the electric guitar help the singer to give the listener a certain feeling?*[14]
> It makes the song[15] more melodious. It is a tragic song. The guitar tries to express more than the words. Like: 'why did she depart from you?': more meaning to the song. Some emotion: very tragic song.
> *PG: Is it angry?*
> Not angry (*laughs*). We should listen to that song when we depart from our girlfriend.
> *PG: Does the guitar make him sound more dangerous?*
> (*Laughs*) The singer does not sound so dangerous. Just his heart is paining.
>
> (A teenage boy at the Pacific Academy)

> *PG: Does your 'destruction' patch*[16] *make you sound angry?*
> When I'm very angry I like to play the 'destruction' sound. When I am relaxed, I use just delay and equaliser, phaser delay is very nice . . . I used to play 'destruction' when I was fed up . . . like when you're angry you speak loudly.
>
> Professional session guitarist hired chiefly for Nepali pop production

> Heavy metal gives many different kinds of moods. When you enjoy this kind of music you forget who you are. You think about wild things. If you are depressed by anything, then when you play that heavy metal, it gives you a different feeling in the mind. A feeling that is not angry. You can stop thinking about your own things [concerns]. People have different ways of enjoying heavy metal. Somebody [one person] feels no worry about things. He forgets everything. Somebody [else] feels very [much] joy. Or maybe crying of the heart, tragic feelings. Just like crying, he misses some lady, whom he likes very much. Can be missing mother or father.
> *PG: So, is the heavy metal sound always about missing something?*
> Actually there are different types of feelings in the heart. Sometimes when I feel very bored,

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I want to go crazy [he shakes head and hands in the air] and that's the different feeling. A let-loose expression. You feel like Tarzan: aaaah!

(A remix singer)

PG: How does the electric guitar help the singer to give the listener a certain feeling?
The song is tragic . . . The guitar also brings the listener to a good mood – the purpose is to express sad feelings so you feel better later.

(An older male listener)

Catharsis is a recurring theme in listener interviews about heavy metal. Perhaps the channel overflow and unflagging sustain that Walser (1993) foregrounds in his heavy metal analysis signifies to Nepalis a more general sense of emotional excess and release. In Nepali experience, therefore, heavy metal embodies catharsis without transgression.

This explains something I initially found quite puzzling in my own personal listening experiences of Nepali heavy metal, especially of Cobweb guitarist Dipesh Mulmi's solos. Although he is quite talented, possessed of a strong rhythmic sense and creativity in improvisation, I began to feel that his solos lack the kind of 'edge' that I experience in Western metal solos. When multiple solos are heard in a single song, entire passages are often repeated verbatim. Often I find that the performative energy increases very little, if at all, from one solo to the next in a song. Although Dipesh's solos are rhythmic and angular, they often do not feel very climactic. This is partly because Dipesh frequently performs his more unusual, 'noisy' sounds and angular fragments not in his solos, but instead in his brief interjections in the vocal line. The song 'Chahera', on the album *Cobweb*, comes to what I experience as a 'sudden' end precisely at the point in an alternating pattern where a guitar solo would otherwise begin: Dipesh passes up an obvious opportunity to end the song with what in Western heavy metal would most likely be the song's most intense, energetic section. I conclude that, in Nepali heavy metal, the guitar solo is no longer the site of the greatest build-ups of performative energy and, by design it is not quite as aggressive. This also explains why Nepali sound engineers say that a primary concern in producing heavy metal is to make sure the guitar does not obscure (i.e., acoustically transgress upon) the other parts, especially the vocals. Their solution is to avoid the extremes of distortion in Western heavy metal, limiting the guitar timbre to a conservative, relatively narrow bandwidth, emphasising higher partials but not producing many lower resultant tones which would make the sound more muddy (compare this to Walser 1993, p. 43).[17]

Inscrutability and cosmopolitanism

Many of the musical styles that make up mix music are even less familiar or semantically determined than heavy metal. Further, because an overarching form is at best weakly projected in most mix music, clues about any fragment's meaning are usually not forthcoming from its musical context. It follows, therefore, that many of the sound fragments in a mix may present themselves to the listener as inscrutable sound bites. By 'inscrutable' I do not mean 'meaningless', but rather 'difficult to fathom, obscure and mysterious'. I find that the inscrutable nature of borrowed sounds is one important, new aspect of the experience of late 1990s Nepali pop. Again and again I encounter sounds which, in listeners' accounts, have very unclear meanings.

It is not just Western sounds that are inscrutable: some traditional Nepali

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sounds are as well. '*Unbho Unbho*', a song concerning a journey into Sherpa territory by the Nepali pop group Mongolian Hearts, starts out with twenty seconds of music from a Sherpa or Tibetan devotional ritual, in which one can hear the distinctive *dung chen* trumpet and cymbals. (Although Sherpas are culturally distinct from Tibetans in many ways, they share a strong heritage with Tibetans, and it is unclear in most of my informants' experiences whether the sounds heard in this passage are actually Sherpa or Tibetan in origin.) The sound bite then fades into a pop music texture featuring guitar, synthesizer, flute and a vocalist. (This passage is included as an online sound file in Greene and Rajkarnikar 2000.) To be sure, it is not new to borrow Tibetan or Sherpa elements into Nepali popular music. For several decades, Sherpa and Tibetan rhythms, such as *bhote selo*, have been incorporated into Nepali popular musics like *lok git*. But these elements have always been subtly reworked to fit the new musical settings, and seamlessly integrated into the music. In '*Unbho Unbho*', the musical contrast is quite patent, and the Sherpa/Tibetan sounds, although recognised as such, are experienced by most listeners merely as exotic sound. In fact, it is not at all clear to most Nepali listeners what the sounds, although precisely reproduced, might mean in Sherpa/Tibetan culture. The passage does not encourage the listener to share an experience of Tibetan or Sherpa culture, nor does it clarify what it is to *be* Sherpa or Tibetan. The passage is inscrutable. Even two Tibetan listeners find it hard to feel really connected to the passage:

> Yes, we can hear the Tibetan sounds, and they have put in a few Tibetan words. It feels like the musicians are interested in Tibetan culture and sound. It makes us feel that Tibetans are included in Nepali pop, sort of. This is just an introduction to Tibetan culture, but it is better than nothing.

Although it is difficult to generalise about inscrutable sounds, I find that their presence in Nepali pop reinforces a spirit of *cosmopolitanism* that is especially strong in Kathmandu youth culture: young Nepalis are aware and very inclusive of the many ethnic groups in Nepal; but these groups retain their cultural distinctiveness, and sometimes remain inscrutable. As mentioned above, because more young people have been coming down from rural villages to the cities for education, Nepali students today encounter more culturally diverse people than any other group in Nepal. Moreover, young Nepalis encounter students who have studied in Europe and the United States, and are preparing themselves for jobs in increasingly multicultural settings. I have played this song for many listeners, and took notes as our conversations moved toward broader social concerns:

> [One] must socialise more: make more friends, interact with many different people. Don't just sit at home. Get confidence, socialise, face the world! There is so much competition nowadays. Socialising is essential to face the competitive world.
> *PG: What are the dangers of staying at home too much?*
> The danger of not socialising: we won't be able to interact with other people. There may be a fear of going out. These days we have to be able to interact with other people. Ten years ago it didn't matter much because people [young women] thought of marriage only, and having kids. Today, we believe you should know the person [you will marry]. Avoid the dangers of arranged marriage.
>
> (A young woman)

> We want to learn about foreign cultures. Older people are not so interested. They are very conservative. It would be better if older people were more interested in foreign cultures.
>
> (A group of young men interviewed at home)

The 'mix' quality of '*Unbho Unbho*' seems to suggest to listeners that, in Nepal, young people of quite different cultures *do* belong together, and must find ways to

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interact despite patent cultural differences. But the song does not suggest a cultural merging. If anything, '*Unbho Unbho*' makes different cultures seem even more different, because of the sharp musical contrast between Sherpa/Tibetan sounds and the ensuing Nepali pop texture. '*Unbho Unbho*' reflects on the diversity of Nepal, and in this sense breaks with the long-standing music genre of *lok git* in which elements of Nepal's diverse traditional musics are organically fused together, bringing to mind the unified nation of Nepal. (In fact, *lok git* was initially cultivated at the state-run Radio Nepal in the 1950s.)

'*Unbho Unbho*' and other songs like it suggest that cultural syncretism in Nepali pop mixes sometimes functions not as a logical *and*, but as a logical *or*. For some time urban ethnomusicologists, following Bruno Nettl's trailblazing anthology (1978), have analysed syncretic music that combines, for example, traditional African polyrhythms with electric guitar, allowing the music to draw together two or more cultural worlds in the construction of a new urban identity: to be African *and* modern (Waterman 1989). In contrast, syncretism in '*Unbho Unbho*' brings to mind at least two different cultural identities: to be an urban Nepali *or* a traditional Sherpa. To be sure, one could argue that the Sherpa/Tibetan sound bite, although inscrutable to urban listeners right now, may be a first step toward a future merging of the two Nepali cultures. But for the time being, 'Unbho Unbho' *clarifies* cultural differences. In the shift from the *lok git* typical of the 1980s to mixes like '*Unbho Unbho*' in the 1990s, Nepali music and culture have generally shifted away from an urban model of syncretic fusion toward one of greater multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, reflecting the new condition young urban Nepalis now experience.

As mentioned above, the differences between musical styles are coming more sharply into focus while it seems that the meaning of each style is, in a sense, going *out* of focus. A remix engineer offers the following insights:

PG: Remixes typically draw together many different musical styles. Why so many styles? Does this confuse the listeners?
It is not confusing. The response depends on what category the listener is in. If the listener is a fan of folksong, then he hears remix as a folksong. He doesn't realise the Western influence in it. Those who are more involved in western lifestyle listen, but don't bother about the wordings. They keep their curiosity on the music, and recognise it as a Western music.
PG: Like a pun? Like a word which can be heard correctly to mean more than one thing?
Yes, exactly.

If this sound engineer is correct, then it seems that *misunderstanding music, not understanding music* and *understanding music differently*, are important modes of cultural experience in Nepal today. In a related vein, Manuel finds that 'the sound of the folk drum or the quaint plinking of the Punjabi *tumbi* lute become at once quirky simulacra as well as symbols of ethnic identity' in South Asian diasporic communities (Manuel 1995, p. 237). In the pop music of Kathmandu, as well as that of South Asia's diaspora, traditional sounds are taking on multiple, complex, sometimes even contradictory layers of meaning, as young listeners today contemplate new, sometimes shifting relationships between their urban, westernised, cosmopolitan lifestyles and their own traditions.

Musical discontinuity and journeys toward professional identities in 'Deusee rey extended mix'

In the remix ['Deusee rey extended mix'] one can find thousands of different kinds of songs . . . joined in the one song. That is why such songs are very popular everywhere. If

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one finds any bad impact by such remix I am the very first wrong maker or fool for that; after that Brazesh has done even more.

(Kumar Basnet, in an e-mail message to the author about his participation in 'Deusee rey extended mix' (1999))

Today in Nepal, the melody is lost in a flashy world. To appreciate the beauty of Nepali music you must meditate on the melody. The new generation has no patience to listen to music while sitting quietly . . . Modern living is also responsible: less time to listen for enjoyment, more for listening to flashy moments, no sustained thought. The population explosion also means people have less time, must work more and be more interrupted, so they can't meditate on the old culture. They need patience to sit and listen. Today, if you do that you can't feed your children. The Walkman is also to blame. People hear music only in interrupted flashes while driving through the city.

(Prakash Thapa, pioneer producer of Nepali films (1998))

'Deusee rey extended mix', as mentioned at the beginning of this article, is a remix produced at Music Nepal which combines rap, distorted electric guitar licks, folksongs and Nepali *lok git*. The original 'Deusee rey' folksongs are part of the Nepali festival of Tihar, on the fourth day of which young men gather together in groups and go from door to door. They sing and call out the words 'Deusee rey', begging for blessings from their elders (Ghimire 1975). In the remix version, a young man travels around and pursues a blessing in the form of a reply to a love letter he has written earlier. (Excerpts from this song are included as sound files in Greene and Rajkarnikar 2000.)

In the two quotes above, two prominent figures in the popular arts of Nepal offer their opinions about the meaning and value of the song, or of mix music generally. I chose these two quotes because they articulate quite eloquently the discursive positions that young Nepalis take as they discuss mix music with me. Often, listeners move back and forth between positions that are close to the two articulated here.

Kumar Basnet, the leading *lok git* singer of the past few decades (Grandin 1989, p. 124) and also a pioneer of Nepali remixes,[18] sees mix music as an appropriate continuation and adaptation of Nepal's musical traditions to the contemporary, westernised, cosmopolitan world. One listener articulates this position as she explains a passage of 'Deusee rey extended mix' to me. I ask her to explain why, in a single passage, one hears the 'sweet', polite, *lok-git*-styled singing voice of Kumar Basnet juxtaposed with distorted hard rock guitar fragments. She explains:

Because this is a modern song. It is modern, quite soothing, entertainment. It is modern culture.
PG: So what is the modern Nepal?
Modern Nepal has technology and Western influence, but also tradition.

This general discursive position seems to be strengthened by the fact that reworked versions of Nepali folksongs, like 'Deusee rey extended mix', are now selling better than either pure folksongs or completely Western-fashioned pop songs (Rajkarnikar 1999).

In contrast, Prakash Thapa argues that the loss of musical continuity in remixes constitutes a fundamental breakdown of an essential meditative quality in Nepali musical experience. Young Nepalis, articulating this position, do not frame the concern in the discourse of South Asian high arts (as Prakash Thapa does), but instead frequently invoke the concept of *mahasus*:[19]

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Mahasus means 'realisation' and 'being convinced'. After you are convinced you feel it. For example, we have realised it is the right thing to focus on one melody . . . You are convinced of happiness, or convinced of a decision . . . Music can convince people: to divert from the worriness, or to stop ruining your life. Sometimes when I have a big worry, I think, I have to give up and die. But a friend may come and say this Sanskrit *sloka* says this, or a song says this and that. I think of these things . . . If music is played in a disorderly way, it won't work.

(An urban listener in his thirties)

An important purpose of music, in many listeners' experiences, is to achieve a target emotion or encourage an experience of comforting realisation, by meditating on words or melodies that 'convince'. Although *mahasus* comes up often in discussions of other musics, listeners, even the most avid fans, rarely use the term to describe mix music. Remarkably, eighty-three per cent of my informants (primarily urban students in their teens and early twenties, representing both genders and several social classes, ethnic groups and caste communities) disagree with Kumar Basnet's claim that remixes are unified expressions (many musics 'joined in the one song'). Further, listeners say remixes do not really continue folk traditions. Seventy-six per cent say that remixes are influencing Nepal in bad ways. Remixes draw attention away from the country's real folk heritage and, if anything, are part of a splintering of Nepal's diverse cultures.[20] Ironically, young Nepalis are quick to critique the new mix sound in which they find much pleasure, and with which they now saturate their lifeways and soundscapes.

Playing 'Deusee rey extended mix' for young Nepalis quickly brings up issues of musical continuity, cultural tradition, technology and westernisation. Listeners typically offer ambivalent opinions on these subjects, sometimes shifting back and forth between positions. A business student offers a typically ambivalent comment:

PG: Is this remix a good or bad thing?
Remix is change. We need change, that's all. Westerners [tourists] come to Nepal for a cultural change. Maybe they adopt something good from Nepali culture. We're doing the same thing. Change can be good or bad. We are tired of our culture. It is very traditional, very Buddhist. Change is good. Not that we completely adopt your culture [i.e. Western culture], but we like it. Change is good.

His apparently contradictory remarks ('change is good', 'change can be good or bad') suggest that he is searching, as he speaks, for a position, a stance in relation to the confusing, contradictory and continuously changing expectations of the traditional and westernised worlds in which he finds himself. Western cultural influence, technology and heightened multiculturalism have clearly brought about positive changes, but in their wake have come drug problems, family problems and even gang warfare in the late 1980s (*Wave* 1997). The business student likens himself, and young Nepalis generally, to soul-searching Western tourists who, since the 1960s, have come to Nepal to explore and carefully select elements from another culture to incorporate into their own lives. Listeners like this student are not finding the sort of *mahasus* described above. Nor are they seeking unified musical statements, like those of *lok git*, which more smoothly integrate diverse musical elements from traditional Nepal and the West, and which may come to constitute a national sound (a charter goal of *lok git* as it was initially cultivated at the state-run Radio Nepal). Rather, the new discontinuous music inspires practices of free association, in which individual listeners contemplate the concerns and conditions facing young Nepalis today. Listeners are not so much fashioning a culturally unified Nepal.

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Instead, they are contemplating multifaceted, cosmopolitan selves – selves that can function in a new, 'translocal' Kathmandu (Liechty 1996).

'Deusee rey extended mix' is an exceptionally thought-provoking backdrop for identity-contemplation because it is remarkably heteroglossic. Like the Western novel, as analysed by Bakhtin, the mix presents the listener with a series of performed personae to consider and to possibly identify with. Whereas most *lok git* or *adhunik git* songs typically feature a single performer, and filmsongs involve at least two lead singers, 'Deusee rey' involves four lead vocal soloists, each performing a distinct persona, and several other voices as well. Furthermore, the remix leaves unspecified how the different personae are interrelated. For example, the rapper (Brazesh), the *lok git* singer (Kumar Basnet) and a third voice, Madan Singh, although clearly quite different, all seem to perform the persona of a love-stricken protagonist seeking a reply to his love letter. And, since part of the reply he seeks is the blessing of the woman's father, the recurring passages from the original *deusee* folksongs, as well as the group of young men one hears calling out 'deusee rey!', can also be interpreted as performances of the protagonist's voice.

As sonic embodiments of the protagonist, each is a likely candidate for a listener to identify with; yet each brings to mind a different genre of music, and each embodies a different affective position with regard to the shared narrative of pursuing a young woman/blessing. The rapper persona is assertive, even demanding ('I travelled from Omugle to Sailung and Kuleshwar to Bhashmeshwar, from Baneshwar to Tripureshwar and from Dharahara to Ghantaghar. Where else haven't I been, to receive the reply of my love letter?'); the *lok git* persona is polite, sweet, even imploring ('Queen of the earth and your youthfulness, I will give this life to you. After making both hearts beat as one, please don't leave me from now on.'); folksong choruses frame the request in traditional Nepali imagery and concepts ('Let's laugh and play, gathering in the paddy dance [*rodi*]. Let's make a love with full strength and desire'.) The song offers not a single affective and cultural response to an unfolding narrative, but a range of responses, and a range of responders. It is not designed to inspire a single *mahasus*; it involves many different acts of convincing as well as a variety of personae doing the convincing and being convinced. Sometimes the singer tries to convince the young woman to marry him; sometimes the singer tries to convince her father to bless the union; and sometimes the protagonist seems to be convincing himself (in the folk-styled chorus: 'As I am a Gorkha soldier, I will definitely marry her.').

Young Nepalis describe the listening experience as a journey (see also Feld 1996), thus reinvoking a metaphor and narrative structure common in Nepali folklore (see Lienhard 1992). I asked one young man why there were so many different musical styles in the remix 'Deusee rey'. He invokes a metaphor of movement to explain:

> People these days can't stay in one place for even half an hour. We get lost listening to the same music for some time. We can't do it – it makes us dumb. I, for example, can't sit in one place for a while. I must move to many places . . . Teenage life is like riding a motorbike through a city.

Several comments like this one lead me to interpret mix music as a kind of multifaceted urban architecture that listeners wander through, a sonic reflection of

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Kathmandu itself, comprised of various ethnic and cultural spaces, each with its own distinctive soundscape. Further, many Nepali pop songs, including most of the ones analysed in this article, involve or tell the story of a journey or trek. In this vein, it is worth noting that my informants describe the freedom to travel and wander around the city as one of the important new freedoms granted to young people in Nepal today:

PG: As a young person, do you have any new freedoms, which young people in the past did not have?
– Yes, we can roam about everywhere we like.
– We can sit with girls and talk with them.
– We are more independent to make decisions. If we want to study or play we can do so.
– We can roam about with girls, and wear different types of clothes.
(Sixteen-year-old boys at the National View College)

Moreover, mix music has actually *become* part of the urban environment young people are wandering through. Played back in countless places, it is now a kind of expandable and retractable architecture, mapping and remapping social spaces in homes, college hostels, marketplaces, parties and picnics. Approaches developed by Schafer (1977), Feld (1996) and others may be helpful here: to consider music not only as a code or symbol complex to interpret, but also as architecture, environment, landscape or place, perhaps with only a weak sense of temporally projected form (see also Sterne 1997; Greene 1999B, pp. 476–84). Nepali mixes are designed to bring to mind various generalised social spaces through particular styles of music, which can be heard to index those spaces in various, generalised ways. The listener is invited to contemplate identity issues before a variety of backdrops, as if on a journey.

In 'Deusee rey', for example, a listener is invited to find herself or himself in traditional folk culture (through folksongs), in 'the West' as a general category (through rap), and then in one of Nepal's new discotheques (through the beat). A sense of multiple, distinct spaces is reinforced through uses of digital effects processors, which help to 'situate' the listener in various generalised places, such as a small room, a valley in the mountains or a concert hall (Greene 1999A; see also Feld 1996, p. 98). Liechty also finds that Nepalis explore and imagine Nepal in terms of various shifting places, including 'nowhere places' (Liechty 1995, 1996). Through music, film and television, Nepalis both imagine themselves and find themselves in not only traditional Nepal but also imagined foreign places, including hip-hop and heavy metal cultural settings, and even New York gangs (*Wave* 1997). The shifting spaces of mix music variously limit and open up the listener's imagination, in some ways inspiring pleasurable but escapist fantasies, and in other ways inspiring constructive reflection on the new, cosmopolitan Nepal.

Concluding remarks

I find that Nepali mixes are not merely a crossover marketing strategy, nor a simple westernisation of Nepal's music. Whereas earlier practices of listening involved imagining Nepal as a unified national community, the new mix sound breaks with the 'unified' aesthetic, perhaps reflecting instead Nepal's more recent slogans of progress (*bikas*), such as 'unity through diversity'. Mixes are not strategies of resistance, for young middle- and upper-class Nepalis instead seek empowerment though approved channels. The ever-changing quality of mix

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music may reflect the fact that this search for empowerment is a very active and responsive one, taking Nepalis back and forth between many cultural worlds, as they respond to the shifting global flows of technologies, information, goods, sounds, images, people and foreign capital upon which Nepal is dependent. Mixes do not prescribe cultural identities from above, nor are they rebellious self-expressions of a youth culture from within. They are pleasurable tools young Nepalis use to imagine, create and recreate the spaces in which they contemplate and construct their own identities. Mixes situate them in the several, contradictory, cultural worlds that are on their minds as they journey toward professional identities in a new Nepal.

My research method, which involves playing music for young listeners and following the conversation into subjects of youth culture and identity, naturally leads me to the patterns of discourse in which Nepali pop mixes are embedded, and in which they take meaning. But despite my emphasis on discourse analysis, I do not want to leave out one of the important new functions mix music has taken on: as a kind of dance music at urban parties, college picnics and in Kathmandu's new discotheques. One evening, my guide and I paid an exorbitant fee of 300 Rs. each, stepped behind a gate guarded by sentries, and spent a few hours at Kathmandu's Sun Moon Discotheque. The interior was much like a Western disco, with flashy images on the walls, a disco ball, a bar and a giant mirror on one side of the dance floor. At first no one was dancing. But at ten o'clock, two young women entered the dance floor and began to dance, incorporating standard 'disco' gestures of the sort often seen in film song-and-dance numbers of Nepal and India. They danced side by side, facing the mirror, watching themselves move. A few minutes later, two young men entered the floor and one of the women left. The three dancers formed a symmetrical triangle, still looking at the mirror, moving up and back together as a unit in coordinated 'filmi' dance patterns. In time, more people entered the floor, and it gradually became more difficult for them to see their own reflection. But this instance of dancing before a mirror, which I suspect is not an isolated one, strengthens my impression that guiding self-reflection is an important purpose of the music. Attuning themselves to the unifying dance beat, young Nepalis reflect on themselves, and dance. Perhaps they are doing something analogous to 'dancing through adversity', as described by Rose (1994): they are dancing, thinking through, and even finding pleasure in the identity issues that arise in today's urban Nepal, and in the many contradictory and ever-shifting cultural worlds in which they now live.

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Endnotes

1. The rap is featured on New Media's *Mega Mix* album, produced at Music Nepal in 1998. Excerpts from this song, including this passage, are included as sound files in the Nepali pop magazine *Wave Online* (Greene and Rajkarnikar 2000).
2. *Chamal* is uncooked rice. Nepalis mix together different kinds of rice, cook them, and serve them together with lentils, other vegetables and spices.
3. *Rodi* is a traditional folk dance of the Gurung people in Nepal, in which boys and girls dance together, sometimes as a prelude to romance or marriage. A *banbhoj*, or 'picnic' (literally 'forest feast'), is a major social event in schools and colleges in which young people play music and dance. The *banbhoj* practice emerges out of a long-standing tradition of having a party after making an offering or animal sacrifice at a major temple. This is why many such picnics take place near devotional or pilgrimage centres. Most are out in the woods, separate from the institutions and spaces of daily cultural life, but today there are also several designated picnic centres which are not located at temples.
4. Yukabar theorises that there may be an emerging subculture of fans of Western heavy metal, since he finds that some young Nepalis write to his magazine with very specific biographical questions about Western heavy metal artists only. However, I believe that even heavy metal in Nepal must be at the most only a small, loosely defined subculture, because none of my informants give any indication that they are aware of Nepali listener groups organised around this or any other music genre.
5. These are the National View College Higher Secondary School, the Padma Kanya Ladies' Campus and the Pacific Academy. (A school which offers degrees past the tenth-grade certification level can call itself a 'college').
6. Young Nepalis do mention the explicit descriptions of sex in the Western raps played back at discos. In my interviews I find that this music is heard not as a vehicle of countercultural rebellion, but rather as a collection of liberal ideas about sexual freedom, which young Nepalis associate with the West. Thus, the Nepali experiences of Western rap seem to reverse a process Feld identifies in Western experiences of world beat: Nepali bodies are freed up by Western rhythms rather than the other way around (see Feld 1988). The Nepali experience of rap undoubtedly has to do with the fact that many young people are rethinking traditional gender relations, critiquing traditional practices of arranged marriage and marrying across caste and class boundaries. More work needs to be done in this vein.
7. The most popular metal or hard rock bands today, according to Kathmandu music vendors, are Metallica, Van Halen, AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, Rage Against the Machine and Def Leppard.
8. I also found that its most identifiable feature in Nepal is the distorted guitar, which, as one listener said, is 'the key to recognising heavy metal'. From responses to additional questions, I was also able to conclude that heavy metal is not mistaken for, or even likened to, any traditional Nepali or Tibetan sound. I asked listeners whether the heavy metal distorted guitar brings to mind any traditional instruments, especially Tibetan ones like the *dung chen*: an extremely loud instrument which, like the distorted guitar, produces a wash of angular sound waves and overdrives the sound receivers of any human ears in close proximity to the source (Pertl 1992). The answer is an emphatic no.
9. Only two of my informants knew that heavy metal originated in Western working-class communities.
10. For those Western listeners who do not feel that boundaries of classical music are 'sacrosanct', the appropriation of classical music may be experienced more as a practice of conformity with tradition than as a transgression. Also, as heavy metal has become an increasingly familiar sound in Western soundscapes, it may have lost its 'edge' as a shocking, transgressive sound.
11. Western classical music is relatively rare in the Kathmandu soundscape, and none of my informants indicated that they heard any connection between heavy metal and Western classical music, inasmuch as they are familiar with the latter. When I asked about specific guitar passages, several listeners volunteered that the guitar player sounded quite talented. Heavy metal is never dismissed as untalented music, but in Nepali experience it seems not to make a claim to the prestige of art music. Although listeners are unaware of the Western classical influence, some of the guitarists know about it.
12. A new heavy metal group called Dristhy are currently announcing the release of their first album, in which one song, 'Roopa Maheswaram', summarises the *Mahabharata*. Singer and guitarist Iman clarifies that the *Mahabharata* is a good subject for a heavy metal song because it is about 'war and aggression'. It does not offer an even spiritual message (*Wave* 1999).

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13. My Nepali research assistant, Mr Shamsher B. Nhuchhen-Pradhan, translated and summarised the texts of all the heavy metal songs we could find and identified these primary emotions.
14. To explore the meaning of the electric guitar sound, my first line of inquiry was to play passages of Nepali pop featuring heavy metal guitar and ask listeners to describe the meaning or emotional quality in the guitar sound. For the most part, I got nowhere: listeners said that it is the singer who is responsible for the meaning and emotional quality of the music, not the guitarist. So I developed a new line of inquiry: I asked how the electric guitar helps the singer to inspire feelings in the listener. Such questions are much more fruitful, and patterns began to emerge from the responses I received.
15. The song is 'Behoshima', one of Deepak Bajracharya's rare heavy metal songs, featured on the CD *Top of the Pop* (Digital Santana Records, Kathmandu).
16. 'Destruction' is the name of a dedicated distortion effects processor. Whereas a common studio practice in Western popular music is to play heavy metal guitar through amps and then mic the amps, in Nepal the guitar cable is plugged into one or more effects processors or pedals which are patched directly into the mixing console. Many guitarists do not own their own distortion pedals or effects boxes. Since the live heavy metal performance scene is no longer active, heavy metal has become more of a studio-based practice.
17. In their promotion of their first album, Dristhy band members claim to offer a new, more distorted heavy metal sound, in which the vocals are *deliberately* 'hard to hear' (*Wave* 1999). This shocking new sound, together with their explanations of it, may in time shift Nepali experiences of heavy metal toward that of Western listeners. Dristhy band members have received musical training in the United States.
18. Kumar Basnet composed and produced remixes as early as 1994, although the genre did not become popular until a few years later. There are others who claim to have produced remixes earlier.
19. The Nepali *mahasus* is a cognate of *mehsus* or *mahsus*, a term which means 'perceived, felt, or known' in Hindi, Arabic, Urdu and other languages in the region.
20. Divided opinions about this song are commonly aligned along gender lines: young women are generally more optimistic about 'Deusee rey extended mix', and young men are more pessimistic. Perhaps this is because young women have less to gain from traditional culture in terms of social status and personal freedom. Young men may therefore be more likely to voice concerns about the decline of traditions.

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