

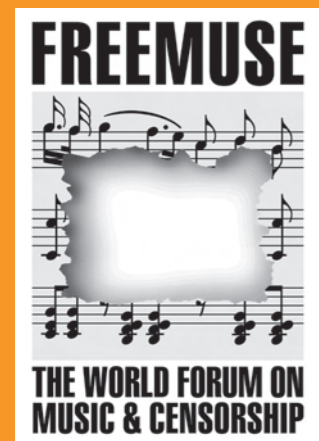
FREEMUSE (Freedom of Musical Expression)
The World Forum on Music and Censorship
is an international organisation advocating freedom
of expression for musicians and composers worldwide.

OUR MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- Document violations
- Inform media and the public
- Describe the mechanisms of censorship
- Support censored musicians and composers
- Develop a global support network

YOU CAN SUPPORT US – VISIT FREEMUSE.ORG

- the only website documenting music censorship globally



Freemuse
Nytorv 17
DK – 1450 Copenhagen K
Denmark

tel: + 45 33 32 10 27
fax: + 45 33 32 10 45

freemuse@freemuse.org
www.freemuse.org

ISSN 1601-2127

**‘ALL THAT IS
BANNED
IS DESIRED’**

كل ممنوع مرغوب

CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN MUSIC

مؤتمر حول حرية التعبير في الموسيقى

BEIRUT OCTOBER 2005

FREEMUSE

‘ALL THAT IS
BANNED
IS DESIRED’

كل ممنوع مرغوب

CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN MUSIC

مؤتمر حول حرية التعبير في الموسيقى

BEIRUT OCTOBER 2005

FREEMUSE

'ALL THAT IS BANNED IS DESIRED'

CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN MUSIC BEIRUT OCTOBER 6-8 2005

Conference Rapporteur: Trevor Mostyn

Published by Freemuse

Editor in Chief: Marie Korpe

Editor: Ole Reitov

Editorial assistance: Layla Al-Zubaidi & Anne Nybo

ISSN: 1601-2127

Layout & Cover: Arevad Grafisk Design

Printed in Denmark 2006 by Handy-Print

© Freemuse 2006

The views in the report do not necessarily represent the views of Freemuse.

Report no. 06/2006

OTHER PUBLICATIONS BY FREEMUSE

"1st World Conference on Music and Censorship" (2001, ISBN: 87-988163-0-6)

"Can You Stop The Birds Singing?" - The Censorship of Music in Afghanistan",
by John Baily (2001, ISSN: 1601-2127)

"A Little Bit Special" - Censorship and the Gypsy Musicians of Romania",
by Garth Cartwright (2001, ISSN: 1601-2127)

"Playing With Fire - Fear and Self-Censorship in Zimbabwean Music",
by Banning Eyre (2001, ISSN: 1601-2127)

"Which way Nigeria?" - Music under Threat: A Question of Money, Morality, Self-censorship and the Sharia"
(also available in French), by Jean-Christophe Servant (2003, ISSN: 1601-2127)

"Singing in the Echo Chamber - Music Censorship in the U.S. after September 11th",
by Eric Nuzum (2005, ISSN: 1601-2127)

Freemuse

Nytorv 17 · 1450 Copenhagen K · Denmark

www.freemuse.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME SPEECHES	Marie Korpe, Executive Director, Freemuse Kirsten Maas, Director, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Middle East Office
KEYNOTE SPEECH	Mai Ghossoub, Artist & Founder of Saqi Books
SESSION I	CONTESTING THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
SESSION II	CENSORING THE ARTS A day in the life of the censor
SESSION III	PERFORMING UNDER CENSORSHIP
SESSION IV	RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS ON MUSIC The Rock Star and the Mullahs The music critic silenced Conservative interpretations of music in Islam Music – halal or haram?
SESSION V	MUSIC & CONFLICT Keynote speech: Marcel Khalife, Musician & Composer. I am a patriot – therefore I praise I am a patriot – therefore I criticise The role of the artists in times of conflict
SESSION VI	MARKET AND MEDIA DOMINANCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MUSICAL EXPRESSION
SESSION VII	BREAKING THE WAVES Breaking the role: Female musicians Breaking conformity Breaking the sound: Heavy metal – a threat from hell?
SESSION VIII	MUSIC CENSORSHIP WORLDWIDE

INTRODUCTION

There is an Arab saying 'Kul Mamnou' Marghoub.' 'All that is banned is desired.'
And there is a Qur'anic command:
'Never forbid what God has allowed. Never allow what God has forbidden.'

Having this in mind it is easy to understand why discussions on freedom of musical expression in the Middle East and North Africa are vibrant.

Very little printed material is available, but recent developments in the MENA region prove that not only do Islamic scholars disagree on the application of the above Qur'anic command, state apparatus and societies also generate different interpretations of political, religious and social limits on freedom of expression.

Freemuse is the only global organisation advocating Freedom of Expression for musicians and composers. Freemuse is also aiming at understanding the mechanisms behind and the consequences of censorship.

This report differs from our previous reports being a report based on a regional conference. The Freemuse regional conference 'Freedom of Expression in Music' was held in Beirut from 7-8 October 2005, in collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Middle East Office and the Irab-Arabic Association for Music.

The aims of the conference were to identify and discuss cases of music censorship, explore limitations on freedom of expression for musicians and composers in the MENA region, establish a network for Freemuse and create a meeting place for the exchange of experiences between people with artistic, academic, journalistic and activist backgrounds.

The conference had participants from 14 countries – musicians, scholars, journalists, cultural managers, artists and a censor.

The conference included strong and personal testimonies by musicians, concert organisers and media professionals who have been censored in Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain and Morocco.

The two-day conference included musical performances and a Middle East premiere screening of the film 'Passion' by Syrian filmmaker Mohamad Malas.

The event concluded with a public concert by exiled Palestinian oud player Ahmad Al-Khatib accompanied by percussionist Nasser Salameh, who played in front of a "full house" at Beirut's Al-Madina Theatre.

The report does not give a full picture of music censorship in the Middle East and North Africa. It does, however, give a picture of a region that – like many other regions of the world – experiences both traditionalist and modernist tendencies, civil and religious trends as well as struggles for self-determination and cultural diversity against cultural domination.

We would like to thank all participants and partners for their dedication.

WELCOME SPEECHES

MARIE KORPE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FREEMUSE

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here to this first conference on freedom of expression in music taking place in this part of the world.

This conference is partially a result of and a continuation of the '2nd World Conference on Music and Censorship' that was held in Copenhagen in September 2002. At the conference Marcel Khalife suggested that Freemuse arrange a similar conference in Lebanon. Finally we are here, so I would like to express my gratitude to Marcel Khalife who initially brought the idea to Freemuse.

Censorship of music exists in many countries, and you will have the opportunity to learn more about international censorship tomorrow after lunch.

Threats and harassment of musicians are commonplace and, today, thousands of musicians live in exile. Everywhere, TV and radio stations ban music for any number of reasons – lyrical content for example.

But, furthermore, many musicians are now resorting to various forms of self-censorship.

The censorship of musicians, composers and others active in the music sector can be extremely violent and severe. Musicians like Lounes Matoub (a Berber singer) have even been assassinated.

***'Threats and harassment of musicians are commonplace
and today thousands of musicians live in exile'***

The killing of Victor Jara in Chile in 1973 and the murder of a woman music TV presenter in Kabul earlier this summer are frightening. Only a month ago seven musicians were murdered in a province of Afghanistan. The reasons for all these murders might be unclear and blurred but, nevertheless, these people were silenced.

We have noted imprisonments of musicians (for example, the Cuban punk musician Gorki) and trials against musicians (for example, Marcel Khalife and the Moroccan heavy metal musicians).

Why is music perceived as a threat, even dangerous?

The answer might lie with the censors themselves, whether the censors are governments, parents or religious leaders. Those who have created these rules certainly must know what they are doing! The Greek philosopher Plato was one of the first to raise the issue. He was obviously disturbed by certain kinds of tunes and tones.

I believe that most of us agree that music has a powerful effect on us human beings; usually a good effect – there is no doubt about that.

Plato distinguished between bad and good music, claiming that bad music could have a negative effect on people. The same standard was used in the Soviet Union during the rule of Stalin. He and his advisors claimed that certain music – modernist music – could harm people's brains and lead to mental illness.

In Denmark, during the 1950's, doctors told parents to forbid their teenagers to listen to music while doing homework or before going to bed. The doctors claimed it would harm them mentally, make them restless, etc.

In Greenland, Danish missionaries forbade the traditional drum played by the Inuit and the indigenous population of Sweden, the Sámi people, faced similar restrictions from church clerics in the 19th century. Even the traditional folk instrument, the fiddle, was at times portrayed as the "devil's instrument".

In the early 1980's I came across a small pamphlet in Tanzania entitled 'Music and its effects' published by the Muslim Bilal mission. It states that music has an effect on the nervous system and can lead to physical dysfunctions.

What is so dangerous about music? Is it because it affects our emotions?

Johnny Clegg, a great musician from South Africa has said 'censorship is based on fear.'
I believe he is right.

It has taken three years to realise the idea brought to us by Marcel Khalife, and nine months to prepare the conference. I hope that the two days we have together will only strengthen our collective knowledge. I believe that two days are not enough to cover a whole region and I hope that not too many of you will get frustrated over the short sessions. We have chosen to invite as many of you as possible to speak in the panels and hope that you will look upon this conference as the start of more to come.

We are here to listen and learn from you, dear speakers. I'm grateful to you for sharing your knowledge and experiences with all of us.

Finally, I would like to thank The Heinrich Böll Foundation's Middle East office for its splendid collaboration, especially Layla Al-Zubaidi who has been coordinating the work from its Beirut office, and our staff in Beirut, Basel Kasem and Manal Khader, for helping out in preparing this conference.

Thank you!

KIRSTEN MAAS, DIRECTOR HBF, MIDDLE EAST OFFICE

I would like to welcome you wholeheartedly this morning and say a few words as representative of the Heinrich Böll Foundation which is co-sponsoring and co-organising this event.

Freedom of Expression and Censorship are two terms that continue to make headlines. Time and again artists, writers, musicians and their work become the centre of heated debate. Public opinion rarely agrees about what should be considered allowed and appropriate and where the objectionable and offensive begin. Opinions also differ sharply about what to do if and when a significant part of public opinion feels offended or even outraged by a work of art, a book or a song. While some consider Freedom of Expression a human right of supreme value, and reject censorship in any form or disguise, others express concern about public decency and demand respect for other human rights, for example the dignity of women, that may be affected by certain forms of artistic expression. In some cases, public expression may offend religious values and beliefs, antagonise or discriminate against certain parts of society or even incite civil strife.

'Böll called for international involvement for the protection of persecuted intellectuals and denied abusive regimes the right to hide behind the principle of national sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction'

The Heinrich Böll Foundation certainly takes a clear position on and against censorship. In fact, the namesake of our foundation, the German novelist and Nobel Prize laureate Heinrich Böll, took frequent and outspoken positions in defence of intellectuals that were subjected to censorship, imprisonment, exile and, sometimes, death. In 1974, Heinrich Böll issued a public statement denouncing 'the hypocritical concept of non-intervention into the internal affairs of other countries' that would prevent politicians from coming to the defence of persecuted intellectuals.

Heinrich Böll, who was known and often viciously attacked for his left-leaning views, made a point of publicly defending and befriending persecuted Russian, Slovenian and East German intellectuals during the days of the Cold War, just as he would denounce oppression of intellectuals in countries allied to the West, such as Turkey, South Korea or Portugal.

An important question raised in his quote is that of international involvement. Thirty years ago Böll called for international involvement for the protection of persecuted intellectuals, and denied abusive regimes the right to hide behind the principle of national sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction. Today, the principle of national sovereignty has lost much of its former absolute power, just as national borders do, in particular when it comes to limiting freedom of expression. While information, images, music and, soon, even movies flow over borders with little or no control, human rights – among them freedom of expression – assert their claim to universal validity.

This, however, may create more problems than it solves, or maybe new problems to replace the old. As the world shrinks, we are becoming neighbours, if virtual ones, with people whose presence and sensitivities we could safely ignore only one generation ago. What is harmless entertainment for audiences in one part of the world may cause deadly offence in others.

The process of defining standards, of drawing the line for what should be considered as covered by the right to freedom of expression, and what should be done to implement those standards, thus becomes exceedingly more complex as the voices which are participating in this debate grow in both number and diversity. To include a wide diversity of voices in one important field of artistic expression, that of music, is the objective of the seminar we are holding.

I would like to express special thanks to the representatives of Freemuse, in particular Marie Korpe, without whose idea for the event, professional knowledge and unlimited commitment the seminar would not have come about, as well as my colleagues Layla Al-Zubaidi, Manal Khader and Basel Kasem who provided their valuable input and helped in Beirut with preparations.

I hope that together we will enjoy new insights and challenging debates in the forthcoming two days.

KEYNOTE SPEECH**MAI GHOUSSOUB, ARTIST & FOUNDER OF SAQI BOOKS**

'Il est interdit d'interdire. Mamnou' al-Manaa.'

'It is banned to ban.'

How I loved this phrase. I was young when I heard it the first time and I stood by it absolutely like a youth standing by his or her principles. I am less young today and I still try to scream loudly; 'It is banned to ban.'

But over the years, I found the absolutism of this phrase challenged, not only by those who raise their scissors and by those in power, but by people like you and me, people who in principle abhor repression and the amputation of creativity. After all, the difficulty with the slogan is that it starts with the word Interdit, Banned. This is why I thank Freemuse for the opportunity they are giving us today to think more deeply about the question of censorship, to understand why people like to muzzle other voices, erase words and burn books instead of turning their eyes, blocking their ears, turning a page or going for a walk when they dislike a tune or some words.

I don't want to waste these few precious moments on the most common and abject reasons that lie behind the scissors and the muzzles of the censors: the preservation of power by dictators, totalitarian regimes, loud racists, fanatics and the likes.

'What I would like to learn more about during this symposium is the more discreet forms of censorship, the invisible ones, the ones that also lie behind 'good intentions'

We all know about them. They do not try to hide their motives. They are afraid of freedom and believe only in their freedom to impose one speech, one colour and one tune, the one that keeps them in power, and the only one that should be heard or seen because they enjoy hearing it and seeing it themselves.

I am not going to speak of the Inquisition and its fathers who tried to censor even the soul of people and mould it to serve the need of their church, nor speak of the Nazis who not only banned music they considered degenerate because it did not fit their understanding of melody, but also banned art created by Jews and Gypsies, people they decided to dehumanise. I will not speak of those fundamentalists who want to ban music as such for they have more chance to succeed if they try to stop birds from singing. No, what I would like to address this morning, and what I would like to learn more about during this symposium, is the more discreet forms of censorship, the invisible ones, the ones that also lie behind "good intentions".

I would like to learn from our debates why I hear many decent people suddenly calling for the ban of this book or that image or this song. I want us to find out why, when we find a song offensive, be it for sexual, political or even aesthetic reasons, we say 'How do they allow people to publish this.' And I am saying this because I know that this reaction is spontaneous, humanly spontaneous and that even people who insist that 'Il est interdit d'interdire', find themselves saying 'This should not be allowed', instead of saying, 'I do not want to listen.' I would like to understand because none of us is immune from falling into the spell of banning as a solution in difficult times or when we think that our children are threatened.

Let me be more explicit. Listen to the following lyrics:

'Slap hips, support domestic violence
Beat your bitch's ass while your kids stare in silence.'
This is Eminem - Slim Shady.

Another tune, a few decades earlier:

'J'ai envie de violer des femmes. *I feel like raping women.*
De les forcer a m'admirer. *To oblige them to admire me.*
Envie de boire toutes leurs larmes et de disparaître en fumée. *To drink their tears etc.'*
(Michel Sardou).

The same Michel Sardou not only needed to humiliate women but Arabs as well:
'Ils ont du petrole, mais ils n'ont que ca. They have oil, but this is all they have.'

Recently, very recently Capleton, the Jamaican Reggae Star, had two concerts cancelled in Britain and in France. He had been singing out loudly:
'All Boogaman and sodomites fi get killed...Burn out a Queer, Blood out a queer.' I translate: 'All faggots should get killed, burn a queer, kill a queer.'

You do, I am sure, find these words disgusting. So should these songs be banned?

Should we ask the radio stations to only broadcast them when the children have gone to bed? Should we have joined the feminist and the gay pride movement's demonstration against the right of these singers to utter their hatred?

'I am sure you find these words disgusting. So should these songs be banned?'

If I cannot dismiss the legitimate outrage felt by the attacked groups through these words, I still cannot see myself joining the call for the banning of the songs or concerts. Because I deeply believe in the freedom of expression and if I ask for the freedom to express my own views and tastes I should have the courage to let others express their own views, however ugly or hurting they may seem be to my eyes and painful to my ears.

I know that some here will ask me, 'What about racism? What about hate speech calling for murder?' I know! I am here to listen and be convinced that words can lead to violence. I am here to find out how we can have an enlightened law fighting racism and discrimination while defending freedom of expression, all expression. It is not easy, but this is a challenge worth facing.

Let us not shy away from some disturbing dilemmas: If hate speech truly can result in violent action, can we honestly feel secure when we say NO to any kind of silencing or censorship?

The case of David Pallister, the 18-year old boy who killed, by battering him to death, a man who was sleeping rough in a shelter, is revealing. Pallister claimed that he acted out the brutal lyrics of Eminem. But two months ago the judge in Newcastle where the crime took place sent him down with life imprisonment. Millions of kids listen to Eminem but they did not act out his lyrics. They took them for what they are: a rap song. I do agree with the court's conclusion that expressing and acting are not synonymous. They are not in the same category.

If the image of something and this something were directly related, how come many of us who grew up watching the cartoons of Tom and Jerry did not become awfully violent? Remember how much bashing and kicking and head-banging the poor cat went through while we were laughing and enjoying ourselves?

Remember Serge Gainsbourg? Censored for his song 'Je vais et je viens', or his ironic remake of the 'Marseillaise'. Remember 'Relax' by Frankie Goes to Hollywood? They were banned not that long ago. Looking at MTV or our own Arabic music channels, they sound like kindergarten chants nowadays.

When I was a teenager in Beirut, two songs were banned by the then Prime minister: 'Riji ala Ishu hal Usfur and 'Ya, mon Cher. Qu'est-ce que nous allons faire, Bayn al-Thaleth wel Rabea Inqata' Fina al-Ascenseur.' (the lift was stuck between the third and fourth floor). What did we all do then? Rush to get a tape or a record of these forbidden Ta'atee (kitschy) popular songs.

To those who believe that censorship works, I will repeat the famous Arab saying, 'Kul Mamnou' Marghoub.' 'All that is banned is desired.' In the Al Saqi bookshop in London many people walk in and ask: 'Where are the banned books?' And it is always a problem, because no bookshop can have next to History, Fiction or Dictionaries sections, a section called Banned!

What I am trying to say is that banning as censorship does not really work.

It is becoming almost impossible, in the age of the Internet, mass tourism and cheap flights, to really suppress a book, a song or an image. This kind of censorship makes it only easier for those who are privileged, well-off or well-connected to have access. It makes the life of those who are not well-connected narrower and brings a new discrimination between the haves and the have-nots.

I say censorship does not work when it is blunt nowadays, but censorship has not disappeared. It is, unfortunately, still with us, in us: would we call the quotas imposed for a while on the French radio to encourage the national language and music, censorship or would we call it encouragement?

When most giant record chains are putting out of business small shops and, at the same time, are promoting their own labels, is this invisible censorship or is it just the way capitalism is going? Are we immune, however courageous we are, to the most pernicious type of censorship: self-censorship?

Shouldn't we fight the glorification of consensus and its rewards, the attraction of social acceptance, in order to free our creativity from all constraints and fears? Is it our business here to interfere with people's psyches? Again, please let us discuss, for the answers are all but simple.

I'll leave with a baggage of questions and a big homage to the great Billie Holiday, whose songs were not banned but who was censored in the ugliest way. She could sing whatever she wanted but in the South, in those segregated days, she was asked to take the service lift, the servants' lift, because of the colour of her skin. It is racism that should be outlawed. Words and tunes, as such, don't kill. Weapons kill.

SESSION I: CONTESTING THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

'The Rebel' - Documentary about Lounes Matoub

The first session of the conference was introduced by a documentary about the Algerian Kabyle (Berber) singer, Lounes Matoub, who was kidnapped by the militant Islamic group, La Groupe Islamique Armée (GIA), in September 1994. Millions of people went on to the streets and demonstrated for his release, and after some weeks he was released and he went into exile in France. Interviewed in Paris in January 1996 by the BBC, Matoub talked about his struggle for freedom of expression:

'You can only feel at ease at home. But you don't always have a choice. I would have liked to be at home, but there's a death-threat hanging over my head. If I return to Algeria I risk being assassinated. I don't know why I was kidnapped,' Matoub said.

'Maybe because I – in the views of the extremists – had become a symbol of the "depravity" of my country. My people have saved me several times, maybe because my music soothed their wounded hearts.

'He who knows nothing is an idiot but he who knows and says nothing is a criminal'

Since time immemorial songs have always been used to convey a message. There are songs and songs - those that entertain, those that enlighten. I feel I am a witness of my time. I have a responsibility because, as we say:

'He who knows nothing is an idiot but he who knows and says nothing is a criminal.'

The Algerian people rose up to expel the colonial power, the French, but not to establish an Islamic or an Arab state. No. These people don't care about identity. All they are interested in is Islam – the Shari'ah and obeying the word of God and the Prophet. It's a vicious circle.

I'm not a Muslim. My father is welcome to be a Muslim, so is my mother, but I have the right to choose. I'm not a Muslim and I have the right to live. But my freedom stops where the freedom of others begins.'

The Berber language is one of the oldest in the world but has been suppressed for decades and Lounes Matoub was probably the strongest spokesman for the Berber language to be recognised in Algeria. Thus, Matoub was challenging state nationalism as well as religious fundamentalism.

In 1998 his longing for his home country made him travel back to Algeria where he was brutally killed.

The session set the framework for a discussion on limits of Freedom of Expression and how musicians are victimised by strong power groups.

SESSION II: CENSORING THE ARTS

BACKGROUND

To understand the background, mechanisms and effects of censorship, it is necessary to analyse local, political, cultural, social, financial and religious contexts.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights, Article 19, protects freedom of expression with some notable exceptions:

- Propaganda for war is always unlawful, as is advocacy for national, racial or religious hatred.
- States may also limit freedom of expression if it is necessary for a certain number of other reasons:
 - Respect of the reputations of others (defamation),
 - The protection of national security, public order, or of public health or morals.

In any case, such limitations must be prescribed in a national law.

Undoubtedly, the exceptions are implemented in many countries without due respect to the intention of the convention and are sometimes misinterpreted to serve the purposes of dictators and religious fundamentalists (South Africa under apartheid being one of the most significant examples).

Freemuse has, since its inception, invited censors to tell their story “from inside”.

The goal of this session was to contextualise the complexity of censorship within countries of the Middle East and, in particular, Egypt. What kind of censorship should artists fear the most; political, religious or perhaps most insidious of all, corporate censorship?

‘With a good censor a deal can be struck; negotiations can be made’

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE CENSOR

Ali Abou Shadi, Chairman of the Central Department of Censorship & President of the Egyptian Film Centre in dialogue with **Serene Huleileh**, Regional Director, Arab Education Forum, & **Ole Reitov**, Program Officer, Freemuse.

Ali Abou Shadi explained that he accepted the job as censor because he wanted to do something positive. 'I tried to change the concept of the censor.' He ran a film centre in Egypt while acting as chief censor. He found the laws to be flexible and took advantage of this to benefit the artist. But he added that, dating from the 1950's, these laws are no longer relevant.

Abou Shadi said that he wants to help artists express themselves openly without infringing the law. He accepts that amendments should possibly be made but says that not only is this a slow process, but that if they are amended there is a danger of much more religious censorship. He believes that the present law is a good omen, allowing freedom and maintaining the morality of society at the same time. Asked about constraints, he said that these reflected the ethics of the country.

The argument of Abou Shadi, who had combined his role of Egyptian censor with running excellent film festivals in Ismailiya and elsewhere, was crystal clear. For the artist it is better to focus on one censor, one entity, rather than be allowed self-censorship where he or she will tend (playing it safe) to exaggerate the censorship. With a good censor a deal can be struck; negotiations can be made. The censor can spend years fighting to defend the rights of song-writers and singers. Abou Shadi believes that if amendments to the law go through in Egypt, the result will not be an elimination of censorship. Far fiercer controls will replace the censor under pressure from increasingly militant Islamists.

'If amendments to the law go through in Egypt, the result will not be an elimination of censorship. Far fiercer controls will replace the censor under pressure from increasingly militant Islamists'

Egypt's censorship department was established in 1947 to protect the interests of the government and protect political regimes in general. It is political plurality, therefore, that means less censorship.

Abou Shadi also explained to the conference that each ministry has its own censorship department apart from the central censorship department. This means that a work might have to face censorship from more than one authority at the same time. In this context he cited the Ministry of Interior as a frequent example.

According to Abou Shadi there is no coordination on the issue of censorship among Arab countries and he saw problems in the fact that all satellite channels have to undergo self-censorship.

DISCUSSION

Responding to Abou Shadi's message, Ole Reitov suggested that most censors, afraid of taking risks and losing their jobs, tend to overdo the censorship.

Abou Shadi said that he had always acted without fear but did admit that he was removed as chief censor because the government wanted someone in the role whom they could manipulate. He countered a suggestion that Egypt's censorship laws were colonial, saying that they date from 1955.

Some speakers were worried that a weak censor would overdo the censorship in order to protect his job but Shadi believed that self-censorship is more likely to lead to unnecessary caution.

Abou Shadi noted that he had never been given a direct order from his superiors on what to censor in any specific case.

By law (in Egypt) all material has to be submitted to the central censorship department. Censors are badly paid and difficult to find in Egypt which has a hundred censors and two hundred administrators in the censorship department but needs many more of both.

As censor he said his job had been to study the music, the theatre script and the songs with the lyrics.

Agreeing with Abou Shadi's premise, Serene Huleileh noted that in Jordan there was little work for the censor because self-censorship was the rule and this was even worse than real censorship. Yes, agreed Abou Shadi, the problem with self-censorship is that people want to play it safe and social censorship, which involves many law-suits, is much more dangerous than state censorship. The state refers all cases to the public prosecutor, fearing that chaos might reign and that the Islamists will prevail. People are bullied into removing scenes by those whom they fear.

The award-winning Syrian film-maker Mohamad Malas, whose haunting film 'Passion' (2004) would demonstrate the fate of women who chose to be singers in a traditional Islamic ambience, congratulated Abou Shadi, agreeing that Egyptian laws were flexible, but asked again whether these laws might be amended.

Abou Shadi reiterated his anxiety that if the laws were amended it would put them into the hands of members of Parliament and become much stricter despite the presence of enlightened committees.

Future TV's Diana Moukalled said that during the 1960's and 1970's Egyptian films had been much freer and asked why this had changed but Abou Shadi disagreed, arguing that times have changed; films were not violent in those days whereas now not only are they violent but Islamist extremist groups have a tendency to burn theatres down when they object to the film that is being shown. Controls are in place even before the film reaches the censor's office. He said that the artist's rights must be protected and the extremists must not be allowed to win. The laws of the 1950's are no longer applicable.

*'If I see a wall in front of me I don't want to go into it.
I want to go around it.
But others say, 'Let's go into the wall and see it collapse'*

Musician and history professor Mark LeVine raised the question of corporate censorship – an issue that would in many ways dominate the conference – wondering to what extent the Egyptian government studies the US's attitude towards censorship in making up its own mind?

On the panel the argument kept returning to the question, should there be a censor? Abou Shadi sees it like this; 'If I see a wall in front of me I don't want to go into it. I want to go around it. But others say, 'Let's go into the wall and see it collapse.' The Berlin Wall lasted many years before it collapsed because it was economy-generated.'

SESSION III: PERFORMING UNDER CENSORSHIP

BACKGROUND

Music censorship obviously affects the creativity, security and income of many artists.

But the mechanisms and effects of music censorship strike differently and artists operate differently in this dark landscape.

There are examples of music censorship that has “promoted” the career/credibility of artists. Examples are Hugh Masekela, Johnny Clegg and Miriam Makeba who became international names and political figures outside South Africa, but were heavily censored at home.

And there are terrible examples of artists who constantly have to fight court cases over their music e.g. Ferhat Tunç in Turkey, artists who are being silenced/jailed (Gorki in Cuba) or even killed (Lounes Matoub in Algeria). And in the case of Iran, female artists are simply not allowed to perform in public for mixed audiences or on TV.

The session dealt with experiences and reflections of the panel and was particularly significant because it reflected, through haunting anecdotes, the struggles of artists worldwide to be able to perform.

‘Every time I perform I tell myself that it is the last time’

PANEL**Mahsa Vahdat**, Singer**Sohrab Mahdavi**, Editor, Tehran Avenue**Khaled Al-Shaikh**, Musician

Mahsa Vahdat, an Iranian singer, introduced her presentation by saying that the question of the legitimacy of different forms of music is one that has roots in Iranian history. She explained that since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran Shi'i jurists (the 'ulama) have limited the freedom of music. For long it was banned and musicians used various strategies to preserve their craft from oblivion.

Vahdat outlined the main obstacles for musicians. She emphasised that the state's control of public spaces is crucial in Iran. In order to perform the musician must seek permission from centres of control such as the Ministry of Culture, the municipality and the police. In some cases, musicians have overcome these hardships only to see their concerts cancelled at the last moment.

The state's determination to control artistic production is another problem. In Iran censorship is strict but the censors have little technical knowledge and musicians are at the mercy of these decision-makers. Meanwhile, the state does not hide its desire to employ the arts to serve state ideology and revolutionary ideals.

Women in Iran can play instruments but they cannot sing. Shortly after the Revolution it was decided that the solo voice of a woman should not be heard by men. Curiously, no official decree has ever been issued in this regard but if ever women try to exercise their right to sing solo they are prevented from doing so.

Nevertheless, women can participate in for-women-only concerts, some of which the Ministry of Culture organises annually and they can also sing in the company of a male singer or as part of a choir.

But many women in Iran today are in fact involved with music in one way or another and have appeared in various capacities in published works. Women singers have also performed at concerts and published albums outside Iran, beyond the reach of state interference. They have achieved this entirely through their own efforts.

'I regularly perform,' she said. 'They don't like it but I want to show that we are here. Every time I perform I tell myself that it is the last time.' In Iran the censor is sensitive to lyrics, even lyrics that do not belong to present time. Lyrics of CDs are the biggest problem.

To put on a concert in Iran you need permissions. You will not be allowed to put up posters so you cannot advertise. As there is no opportunity for music to have a critical edge, many famous musicians are unwilling to perform in Iran. In Iran the average age is the early 1920's and these young people have little hope as they are not taken seriously. As a young woman Vahdat found herself sidelined many times. The major problem is a social one in that families seldom allow daughters to sing as a profession so singing is effectively closed to women.

In Iran, there is no educational planning or academic training institute for singers, be they women or men. There are only private institutions in big cities. Besides this, female students who want to pursue a musical career must convince their parents. Therefore, many musical talents go unnoticed or are suppressed, depriving the world of an important source of musical fertility.

Sohrab Mahdavi, editor of the e-culture magazine Tehran Avenue, said that the more he has researched censorship in Iran the more confused he has become about the meaning of censorship. What are the forces? How do they function? The field of popular culture is a battleground today, he said.

Mahdavi tried to identify forces that influence the shifting fields of popular culture in Iran. The first area of conflict is between the official ideology and wayward, independent musical tendencies. Both the state machinery and the officially sanctioned religious apparatus dictate what is permissible and what is reprobate. The two may both reflect the same system of social control but there is a fine line separating them.

He sees “popular culture” as a battleground of criss-crossing influences but says that censorship is not a unidirectional vector; there are many forces influencing it. This is what makes musical censorship complex in Iran. One often hears the argument that Islam (or at least more conservative interpretations of its tenets) is suspicious of music per se, accounting for limitations imposed on music, but religion also helps create music that has not always been approved by the state or the religious apparatus.

After the Revolution Khomeini’s pronouncement that the religious code (Islamic law, the Shari’a) and the state law were contiguous surprised many grand religious leaders who saw the two occupying different and, at times, opposing spheres.

‘When Khomeini declared in 1987 that the sale of musical instruments was permissible, the majority of grand ayatollahs did not support his call’

Other official tendencies can also be identified here. The traditionalists of Persian music have always exerted their own influence. In the two decades preceding the Revolution traditional musicians, some of whom had actually studied in Europe, were fearful of the influence of western music (pop and rock) on a generation that was more and more exposed to a brand of music that knew no boundaries and recognised no disciplines.

Though traditionalists were not openly religious in their arguments, the language they employed foreshadowed that which later was used by revolutionary forces, namely, that Iranian music was facing a crisis that threatened its continued existence. They called for a control mechanism that would limit the power of commercial influences in music and that instead would support an authentic music that spoke truth to the sensibilities of Iranian culture. Mahdavi emphasised that although it is banned, urban pop music is very active in Iran and popular with the working classes.

‘Urban music’, says Mahdavi, ‘is not restricted to rich kids in Iran but is also available to and popular with the poor these days. CDs are now easily available so some benefit even in poor, rural areas. Technological developments might even favour the rural poor in some cases.’

‘We need awareness. We don’t need censorship’

The Bahraini singer **Khalid Al-Shaikh** noted the irony that the word for censorship in Arabic (Raqaba) also means ‘Neck.’ He saw irony in the fact that while the Soviets were censoring youth music they were, at same time, producing great classical works of musical art.

Khalid Al-Shaikh has had some of his songs banned in Bahrain but told the conference, ‘When Sheikh Hamad met King Hussain, the latter noted that I was well-known in Jordan. ‘Yes’ replied the Bahraini ruler, ‘He sings nice songs which criticise the government. Do you want to hear them?’

Al-Shaikh noted that suffering sometimes creates the motivation to give more. Often the best music is produced during times of oppression. 'Now', says Al-Shaikh, 'we have a bitter choice; we must either treat the disease or focus on a remedy.' He sees censorship as a challenge to freedom, both for the one who censors and for the artist who is censored. Sometimes the one who does the rejecting becomes the rejected. 'We need awareness. We don't need censorship. We need to be aware of all forms of censorship. If we focus on other things censorship will collapse of itself.'

Al-Shaikh said that lobbying by Islamists had led to a much stricter attitude towards concerts in Kuwait. Men and women must now be separate. Dancing is not allowed.

Kuwaitis are enthusiastic and ambitious. Traditionally, Kuwait has a free press, good television and radio and a great culture but this is changing and the intellectuals who led the freedoms are increasingly limited by fierce lobbying from religious groups.

Social restrictions apply; for example, the Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram's concerts have been banned in Kuwait. The extraordinarily popular and beautiful Egyptian singer Ruby, often banned from broadcasting in Egypt itself, is also banned from performing in Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti government said that singers like Nancy Ajram and Ruby were leading its youth towards temptation. Nevertheless, the first episode of Big Brother has just been shown in Bahrain.

DISCUSSION

Ole Reitov noted a similar irony that Saudi princes support singing while the state bans it. Many investors in entertainment are Saudis; for example, Prince Talal Ibn Al-Waleed owns Rotana. It might be that those who exert control through images do so on the grounds that if one controls space one controls everything.

Khalid Al-Shaikh saw the irony in the fact that most of the singers in the Gulf are from Saudi Arabia and the same is the case with most of the investors. But Saudi Arabia imposes the worst censorship.

'Lebanon', he said, 'had seen new cultural freedoms under Prime Minister Salim Al-Hoss (Prime Minister 1998-2000) but Lebanon still has little knowledge of how to (confessionally) co-exist. Culture is in conflict with religion. Lebanon also has a hierarchical arrangement although the pyramid is now horizontal.'

Diana Moukalled added that when she lived in Saudi Arabia as a child she experienced how music was censored because it made you move your body.

Mai Ghossoub asked why music in Iran is more censored than art, and especially considering the rich production in visual arts such as cinema.

Mahsa Vahdat replied that after the Revolution everything was unclear. Many things were banned. After the war with Iraq it was dangerous to produce music and many musicians went abroad to work. The worst side of censorship in Iran, she said, is the banning of the female voice but things are beginning to improve.

Sohrab Mahdavi said that pop musicians were forced to leave Iran after the Revolution. Most went to Los Angeles. At that time it was dangerous in Iran even to have this music in your car, but now things have changed. Urban pop music is very active in Iran and popular with the working classes although it is still banned.

The other most popular genre is passion-play music during the Shi'i mourning periods of Muharram and Safar, a practise which flourishes in teqiyehs (monasteries of Muslim orders). Everything happens there except for the female voice.

SESSION IV: RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS ON MUSIC

BACKGROUND

Conservative interpretations on music regulations are well-known in Christianity and in Islam. Since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 several musicians have been attacked by fundamentalists.

Islamic scholars and some priests have condemned the use and production of music, but attacks and implementation differ enormously from country to country.

Why are female performers widely respected in Mali but not in Iran?

Is it possible to have a dialogue between musicians and fundamentalists?

Why is it that certain scholars totally condemn musical activities? Are there any grounds for this in the Qur'an or are these interpretations based on the Hadith, the Sunna, the Sira and other sources?

The session divided into two parts, focussed on recent applications of music censorship in Pakistan, Iran and The Middle East.

'There is no ban on music in the Qur'an, and those talking about which music is haram and which music is halal have very weak evidence'

'THE ROCK STAR AND THE MULLAHS'

Excerpt from a documentary film with Salman Ahmad, Musician

It was Lahore that gave Pakistan the band that started the popular music revolution in the late 1980's and early 1990's, The Vital Signs, with three boys from the University of Engineering and Technology and one from the King Edward Medical College. The band went on to change urban Pakistan's musical tastes. Under the name Junoon they became South Asia's largest rock band. **Salman Ahmad** was the guitar-player of the band.

The session on religious restrictions on music was introduced by clips from the film 'The Rock Star and the Mullahs' in which Salman Ahmad went to Pakistan's North West Frontier Province where the local government, having won the elections, decided to ban music. Ahmed visited young traditional clerics in a moderate Pakistani madrassah (religious school).

He asked the clerics in which Sura of the Qur'an music was forbidden and they invoked a Hadith which only allows the duff (drum) to be played. They told Ahmad that in Islam it was forbidden to cultivate a passion for music. Ahmed told the clerics that the Prophet David had been given the gift of voice. 'When he sang the mountains swayed,' he said.

He sang verses of the Qur'an accompanied by his guitar. They were friendly towards him and willing to discuss the issue. One said to him about his long hair, 'Your hair is very nice.' But they told him that he would go to hell if he played. 'Am I your enemy?' he asked them.

'It's not their voices that are speaking. It's a pre-programmed commentary,' he said. 'But they were open to me. They allowed me into the madrassah with my guitar and listened to my views. What I saw there was a snapshot of a larger dialogue in Pakistan.'

'Your hair is very nice but if you play music you will go to hell'

Salman Ahmad had even visited one of the hardliners, a mullah, in Peshawar.

'I quoted verses from Iqbal (the Urdu poet). I argued that Islam is a religion of reason and knowledge and that we must free ourselves from ritual. So I was curiously touched when he said to me, 'Salman, I don't want you to be angry with me.'

Then, once the mike was off, he sang verses from the Qur'an, beautifully. I said 'Why the change? You are singing but for two hours you condemned singing.' He said that it was okay because he was only singing privately.'

In a dialogue between Salman Ahmad and Ole Reitov, Ahmed said that there is consensus amongst the scholars that there is no verse in the Qur'an that prohibits music. But when they refer to the Hadith there's much disagreement.

Islam in the Indian Subcontinent came with the Sufis who believed in reaching God through cultural expressions such as poetry, music, dance, singing and the use of instruments. Ahmad commented that the puritan Taliban view is alien to most people.

'People who want to ban music are a minority but conservatives have taken power in the media,' he said.

'The music critic silenced' - Iranian journalist

A young Iranian woman journalist fell foul of the regime after she reviewed a book on women and music which stated that the Prophet Muhammad enjoyed listening to women's voices. The article, in a government newspaper, led to demonstrations in Qom (the principal Shi'a centre in Iran) against her as well as against the writer. The book had been cleared by the government censorship board but when a local newspaper wrote an editorial against the review all books were gathered up and destroyed and she was arrested. The person in the Ministry of Culture who had allowed the book's publication was also arrested. He was moved from his position in the office.

'When I went to court the judge told me that I had to answer all of their questions. The interrogator told me that I had to go to the underground of the building with him. A man whose face I couldn't see ordered me to stand against the wall. I stood like that for half an hour and I was made to answer questions for four hours. When he found out that I worked for a reformist newspaper he started asking a lot of questions about that. It seemed more important to him than the sentences I wrote in the review. He told me that if I gave him information about the office of that newspaper he would set me free.'

'The article, in a governmental newspaper, led to demonstrations in Qom'

She was asked about every trivial habit.

'They thought I wanted to work with them. They asked for names of people but I refused.' Eventually she was given a year in jail but freed in the end when her lawyer succeeded in arguing that the review had 'not intended' to insult Islam. Finally, the judge declared 'You are free because of "Islamic kindness."'

For a year the censor who originally cleared the book couldn't work in a government office. The author of the book was sentenced to a fine. The publisher was arrested for some time and all the books were confiscated from his bookshop.

**CONSERVATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF MUSIC IN ISLAM
– THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE****Practical applications in music and media in relationship to regulations of music in Islam**

Jonas Otterbeck, PhD. Islamic studies scholar

Without an understanding of Islamic theology it is impossible to understand why music has created such an intense debate throughout the history of Islam. While some of the world's most beautiful music has emerged from the Islamic World, this is also where it has been most fiercely condemned.

The session 'Conservative Interpretations of Music in Islam – the theoretical perspective' included a very detailed analysis of music in Islam by the Islamic scholar Jonas Otterbeck and a perspective from Shaikh Ibrahim Ramadan Al-Mardini of the Beirut Studies and Documentation Centre.

The conference had invited several Islamic scholars representing conservative interpretations of Islam in terms of music. However, at short notice two scholars cancelled their participation and, thus, a discussion between the scholars and Jonas Otterbeck could not take place.

Jonas Otterbeck outlined the historical development in Islam and the sources on which the ban on music is based. He explained the musical hierarchy in Islam and how it could be discussed.

The increase in satellite television and radio channels since the early 1990's has had a huge impact on urban elites but also villages, like the cassette revolution of the 1960's and 1970's. This development has brought new music to people in the Middle East and has also triggered an interest among Islamic scholars who have issued fatwas about music. Among the 'ulama opinions on the legality of music differ, based on the four major Sunni legal schools which developed from the early 9th century onwards, ranging from general legality to a general ban.

Sometimes genres such as singing and the playing of the nay (reed flute) were targeted. Decisions are based upon the key Islamic sources, the Qur'an, the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet), the Sunna (the 'way,' actions of the Prophet), Sira (the biography of the Prophet) and the Salaf (the stories of the Companions of the Prophet). Still no clear conclusion on the subject has been reached. For example, is the 'Idle talk' (lahwal hadith) mentioned in Sura Luqman, ayat (verse) 6, a reference to singing and listening to songs? The radical religious think that it is, rather than a reference merely to vain and void communication.

Otterbeck referred to a model constructed by the late expert on Islamic music and art Lamyia Al-Faruqi in which she compares religious tonal expressions and Arabic musica. The first includes Qur'anic chant, the call to prayer, pilgrimage chants, eulogy chants, chanted poetry with noble themes, family and celebration music, occupational music, military band music and music related to the pace of the camel, for example.

What is controversial for Islamic scholars is instrumental music, serious metered songs, pre-Islamic and non-Islamic music. Depending on the interpretation of the Hadith this 'controversial' music can be labelled halal (allowed), makruh (blameworthy) or else haram (forbidden).

The second split is between what is haram (forbidden) and what is halal (allowed), the latter on a gliding scale which includes makruh (blameworthy). In Islam, for example, divorce is 'blameworthy' but it is also halal, so certain form of music can fall within grades of halal. Women singing at religious feasts may be either makruh (blameworthy) but still halal, (allowed) or else haram, (forbidden).

'Never forbid what God has allowed. Never allow what God has forbidden'

The question is where does heavy metal, rock, rap, hip-hop, jazz, rai, sha'abi (folk, popular) and pop fit into this pattern? Is a style problematic in itself or is it the contents of the lyrics? And what about highly commercialised and sexualised video clips? The ultimate premise for a theologian is based upon the Qur'anic command, 'Never forbid what God has allowed. Never allow what God has forbidden.'

It is an individual's duty to adhere to the four grades of hisba (Al amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar, 'the commanding the good and the forbidding of evil') to prevent fitna (strife), the breakdown of society. He cites the civil war in Algeria, strife in Palestine and the emergence of the Taliban as examples of Islamist movements which have legitimated their aggressions against opponents by claiming they protect society from fitna. In Iraq an 'alim (plural 'ulama) even accepted the showing of a film showing young people being brutalised and killed for listening to music and dancing in a public park as legitimate warning to people committing fitna.

Otterbeck encouraged people to go to various sources for further knowledge on this debate: Islam Online and, for example, the home pages of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and Muhammad Nasir Ad-Din Al-Albani.

Finally, Otterbeck noted that when we look at public actions taken, it is important not to focus entirely on religion. 'The discourse in itself is seldom the only motive for action. Other motives might be economical, political, social, protectionist, moral panics, etc,' he said.

MUSIC – HALAL OR HARAM?

The perspective of Shaikh Ibrahim Ramadan Al-Mardini, The Beirut Studies and Documentation Centre

'There is no ban on music in the Qur'an, and those talking about which music is haram and which music is halal have very weak evidence' Shaikh Ibrahim Ramadan Al-Mardini, from the Beirut Studies and Documentation Centre in Lebanon, told the conference.

He said that 'a music culture is necessary for people to develop themselves,' adding that 'any limitation on the arts is the opposite of what religion calls for.' Al-Mardini said that 'music doesn't know male or female,' and that it is not for religious scholars to control people but to guide them. 'The individual has to rule his or her own life through their own judgement,' he said, noting that Islamic scholars in the last century often had a very good knowledge of culture and art, and that 'culture is something owned by everyone, and not something that a few persons should decide upon.'

*'Censorship has turned into a totalitarian tool
which is preserving the existence of regimes'*

The 'ulama interpret the rules and correct people when they go astray. Justifying some forms of music, he quoted the Prophet saying to one of his Companions, 'You came with a very good ear.' The mufti (Shari'a judge) is entrusted with disclosing the judgements of God, basing his views on the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sunna. Music is not banned in Islam; strong counter-evidence exists showing that it is allowed. In Islam reading was traditionally accompanied by music.

Shaikh Al-Mardini questions the sources invoked to ban music. For example, eighty Hadiths were used to prove it unlawful but of these seventy were dhaif (weak) or very weak.

There is no Qur'anic text banning music, he insisted.

In Islam the Sultan only intervenes when humans deviate from God's judgement; the Sultan and the faqih (Islamic jurist) are symbiotic.

Censorship, Shaikh Al-Mardini noted critically, exists to preserve regimes.

'Censorship has turned into a totalitarian tool which is preserving the existence of regimes – we see this all over the world. Who can impose a just censorship without being biased?' the Shaikh asked.

Shaikh Al-Mardini said that he completely rejects censorship, arguing that it is not the mission of the faqih to condemn things; his job is merely to guide the faithful. A fatwa is no good unless it develops. It must not be static. The faqih has to be flexible. The faqih must be with the times and understand them.

Any constraints on arts is against religion, he said, and concluded that music is a universal discourse; it is the language of this discourse and anyone can express himself, whether he is right or wrong. Those who have said that Islam forbids music are completely false; the evidence is not correct, he said.

From the earliest history in all cultures we have seen people who wanted to ban music but societies have always co-existed with music.

DISCUSSION

Jonas Otterbeck wondered how the Shaikh looked upon so-called sensuous music or music using satanic symbols. Lyrics can be provocative but it is not forbidden – they can be good or bad – but music in itself cannot be banned, the Shaikh replied.

Diana Moukalled said that the standpoints of the Shaikh were not adopted by most other scholars. She also mentioned that repression does not only come from religious but also from political circles.

Pierre Abi-Saab noted that although many people in the Arab World agreed with the view of the Shaikh, this was seldom reflected in the public debate.

Mark LeVine wondered whether there was a difference between Shi'a and Sunni scholars in terms of music. In general he found some Shi'a scholars more open. LeVine said that a discussion on music with religious scholars could be endless; therefore, a discussion might be more fruitful in terms of public space – whether religious scholars succeed to implement their ideas in the public space as a state law.

Salman Ahmad mentioned that many of the young religious students live a schizophrenic life between how they wish to live and how some of their strict teachers tell them to live. He congratulated the Shaikh for his research and said that if his paper was translated into English he would like to publicise it. Ahmed finally invited the Shaikh to come to Pakistan.

Mohamad Malas felt that the intervention of the Shaikh was extremely important. He congratulated Al-Mardini for the analytical perspective. 'We've been misled from so many other sources,' he said, and suggested the speech should become a conference document.

Moe Hamzeh noted that the problem of censorship was not just a question of Islam alone but rather a question of religion and extremism all over the world and that this extremism has affected the development of music negatively.

Several participants congratulated the Shaikh for his very clear speech and regretted that more conservative scholars had not been willing to take part in the discussion.

Concluding the session the Shaikh noted that fundamentalism does not have a region. 'We find this in all societies', he said, 'some 'ulama are living mentally in former centuries and are issuing fatwas according to former times. Fatwas have to be issued according to the changes of society,' he said.

He referred to books indicating that there are issues where faqihs cannot intervene.

'Muslim youth are influenced by Sufi poets such as Rumi who wrote that the spirit of the believer is like the nay; when he is far from his country he is filled with nostalgia. Innovation is the basis of arts; if you ban innovation you stop art. Music is a universal discourse, without nationality, sex, identity or religion. It should be expressed freely whether it is right or wrong.'

Finally the Shaikh noted that music culture is necessary to develop culture. In former centuries the Shaikhs had a very good knowledge of arts, he said.

SESSION V: MUSIC & CONFLICT

BACKGROUND

Musicians have rarely been far from conflict and, like writers, are often the first victims of a conflict. They have traditionally used song and music to deliver political messages, just as governments have tried to use them to support the government line during periods of conflict.

In the US rap artists are in conflict with the established society. Religious leaders in several societies are constantly attacking musicians. The civil war in Lebanon, the increasingly unhappy state of war in Palestine today and post 9/11 attitudes to the role of artists in the West have all had a big impact on musicians. This all affects media policies and the access of audiences to music.

'The artist in times of conflict has a bigger responsibility than even the highest level politician – the artist is responsible for increasing awareness and for presenting the civilised and cultural face of society on both the local and international levels'

KENYNOTE SPEECH: MARCEL KHALIFE, MUSICIAN & COMPOSER

In 1999 **Marcel Khalife** was accused in Beirut of blasphemy for singing a song 'Oh my father. I am Yusuf,' based on a poem by Mahmoud Darwish. The story of the biblical Yusuf and his brothers, from an aya in the Qur'an, had drawn hostile attention from Dar Al-Fatwa, Lebanon's highest Sunni religious authority.

'We must eliminate censorship,' says Khalife. 'The censorship officer is, in reality, a security officer. In the lawsuit over my song 'Oh my father, I am Yusuf' I was declared innocent. An Islamic group in Syria said that I had used Qur'anic verses in my song based on verses of the poet Muhammad Darwish. It was as if I was about to put all of the Qur'an into my songs. I refused to be intimidated.'

Khalife quoted the '2nd World Conference on Music and Censorship' organised by Freemuse in Copenhagen in 2002 which he had attended. The conference had included a South African musician and the policeman who had brutally stopped the career of the musician during the Apartheid era. That sort of meeting, sadly, never happened in Lebanon after its civil war, he said. Conflict makes the enlightened person more independent; he needs to be determined to develop.

*'The intervention of religious leaders in culture is not acceptable...
they cannot put the security organs and bodies at their disposal
to prevent people from listening to a song'*

'Despite the collapse of companies in Lebanon, the intellectual plays a vital role,' says Khalife. 'He is the closest channel to dreams of his people. If the artist loses his dream it is a catastrophe for the people. Artistic innovation remains a continuous concern for people and it is the heart of the artist that creates innovation. This innovation should be the criteria for marketing. No obstacle will prevent the artist from creating. The artist must have wings and we must help him fly. We can't tell teachers how to fly. In our world there are many insults to face up to and we have no illusions about the ferocity and injustice that we see about us. But in the darkness of the night we can see the noble essence of Man.'

The problem today is the nature of censorship. The security men bow before the religious leaders. We must change the law; we cannot accept the authority of religious leaders. The intervention of religious leaders in culture is not acceptable in culture any more.

Religious leaders may advise some believers not to listen to a certain song, but they cannot put the security organs and bodies at their disposal to prevent people from listening to a song. And the security officers cannot give "good behaviour" certificates to people. Artistic censorship has to be stopped as well as this alliance between the police and religious leaders.

There is something very shameful about the alliance between religious leaders and policemen. The freedom of the innovator is now under threat. He or she is controlled by the people who own the media and have the money. The more the innovator clings on to freedom, the more he will flourish. I thought here I would fall into the media trap when I was invited by Freemuse but I did not.

The powers are trying to coerce us into entertainment arts. I am suspicious of the role of entertainment companies broadcast by satellite channels. It leads to a series of lies; to the culture of money and the culture of marketing. This development is the result of a political, social and cultural atmosphere created by and protected by the authorities. It leads to many sensitive problems. The authorities are afraid of people who are connected with the future. I ask the censorship officer, why doesn't your department have a law to protect intellectual property?'

Khalife expressed his worries about the piracy of art in the Middle East and the silence that prevails over copyright theft. 'Artists are reaching the point of despair,' he says. 'Musicians must not remain silent about these issues. What is the value of technology if it does not help Man realize his desires? We don't have miracles but we have dreams. We are fed up with slogans about materialism and with embargos on intellectuals. We won't allow people to put spokes in our wheels.'

I am a patriot – therefore I praise: Songs praising Hariri

Future TV's **Diana Moukalled** discussed songs praising the late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri who was killed in a bomb blast in central Beirut in February 2005.

'In the undemocratic systems of the Middle East', she said, 'songs that praise presidents and kings are the norm as well as songs that praise the Palestinian cause and hail "martyrs". However, Lebanon does not have a tradition of songs that praise presidents. Lebanese national songs praise the army, the resistance (to Israel) and those killed by the Israelis. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) each faction had its own songs and singers.'

But after Hariri's assassination Future TV, Hariri's own channel, presented regular songs in Hariri's honour. These songs and images, especially in the first few weeks after his death, played a big role in mobilising people to participate in the demonstrations that followed. It was the age of the "patriotic song".

I am a patriot – therefore I criticise

Salman Ahmad emphasised the important role artists can play in times of conflict. Having shown an excerpt from a documentary on his band Junoon's tour in India, Ahmad told of how the band found itself in a political crossfire at home.

Since 1947 when India and Pakistan became independent there has been a land dispute over Kashmir.

'The political dispute has always been between the two governments; the people of the two countries have never been part of this discussion. When you grow up with "an enemy of the state", the other people are being demonised. But I didn't have this picture from my family, which had moved from India in 1947,' he said.

'So when we went to India in 1988, India tested their nuclear weapons and two weeks later Pakistan in response tested its nuclear weapons, and we came into the crossfire in the media in India. We said that both countries have the same problems; you have poverty, you have people who don't have clean drinking water and lack of education. But both people and both countries want peace, we told the press. But when we came back the Minister of Culture said that we had 'belittled our nationality' and argued against the nuclear weapon and, therefore, there was a treason charge against us. It reminded me of the McCarthy trials in the US.'

'A lot of young people who followed our music questioned why someone who was asking for peace was banned'

'My argument was that being patriotic doesn't mean that you agree with dumb decisions. So we were banned for three-four years. But what it did do – and this is why I believe pop culture can play an important role – was that a lot of young people who listened to our music questioned why someone who were asking for peace was banned. The cynics said we were stupid and shouldn't make these statements in public. But I think it changed the public perception and took us to where we are now where both governments are normalising their relations.'

THE ROLE OF THE ARTISTS IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

PANEL

Ahmad Al-Khatib, Musician

Davey D, Historian & Journalist

Clotaire K, Rapper

The Palestinian musician **Ahmad Al-Khatib** performed and taught oud (Arabic lute), cello and Arabic music at The Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Ramallah, Palestine in 1998. In September 2002, when the Israelis invaded the West Bank and destroyed much of Palestine's infrastructure, Al-Khatib went into exile and now works from abroad. Al-Khatib has been denied access to Palestine since then. Teachers were threatened because they refused to leave their homes which became virtual prisons, surrounded as they were by roads for use by Jewish settlers only and by Israeli checkpoints.

After the Israeli invasion some of the workers and teachers, including Al-Khatib himself, were arrested, threatened and almost killed just for staying in their homes and not fleeing. Tanks and soldiers roamed their streets freely. They lived in a closed military area where a soldier has all the right to do whatever he liked, knowing that a legal explanation could always be conjured up for each crime. Under these circumstances, he and his fellow teachers found themselves more committed to their jobs than ever before. With many foreign teachers leaving, each of the remaining staff had to fill empty places. The conservatory was determined to keep its doors open and keep war outside the music rooms.

Today, he says, being surrounded by a wall, people cannot move between West Bank towns without Israeli military permission and reaching Jerusalem is almost impossible for Palestinians holding West Bank identity cards. Israel controls everything for four million Palestinians; transforming lands into minefields and cities into big prisons. He says that all he and his colleagues think about is how to continue offering a good music education.

Today, the biggest challenge is to keep politics outside the walls of the conservatory. Whatever harassment the teachers and students face, their duty is to provide full music education for Palestinian society and culture. Al-Khatib said that the artist in times of conflict has a bigger responsibility than even the highest level politician – the artist is responsible for increasing awareness, spreading and safeguarding the culture of his/her people, and to present the civilised and cultural face of society on both a local and international level.

The journalist, hip-hop historian and radio DJ **Davey D** identified pernicious forms of control in the US. Americans are discouraged from looking into the past, he explains. The attitude is to reinvent the wheel. The artist is there merely to entertain. However, for indigenous cultures and particularly black Africans, dancing is not just entertainment but has a deep, serious meaning. The slave-dealers saw that song and dance was deep inside this culture and that it moved people into action. They tried to strip them of their culture and make them assimilate to Western culture. New forms of song emerged. 'I'm just singing a song,' the black singer would say but the slave-dealer would fail to recognise the significance of the song.

'The trick is to manipulate and mismanage information and distort culture so that people do not fully realise their power'

New black culture inspired people not to be afraid of the police. They sang about the exploitation of diamond miners in Sierra Leone, creating fear in a diamond industry worried about threats to its sales.

'The power structure in America clearly understands the potential that artists have when they start to move the crowd. The trick is to manipulate and mismanage information and distort culture so that people do not fully realise their power,' he said.

'The powers want to strip us of our culture,' he says. 'The rap group Niggaz with Attitude emerged. There was a song called 'Fuck the Police' in response to the behaviour of the Los Angeles police who are notorious for their persecution of many minorities. Ghetto kids are considered by the white middle classes as beautiful but they don't look at the political meaning behind the songs. The new form of control is more subtle and targets celebrities. It prevents black artists from going to their communities. They lose their identity and become out-cast in a white society. Look at the enormous influence in the US of right-wing Fox TV,' says Davey D.

'Rap artists like Chuck D and Fred Wreck are seen as people acting the fool. The trouble in the US is that we can say what we want to say, but can we be heard? Government power structures in the US have their own agendas. The COM Intel Programme told Americans that we must fight Communism and that groups like the Black Panthers will undermine the security of the country.'

Davey D said that black artists have two icons: Bob Marley who was constantly shadowed by the CIA and 2Pac who the government said was a "thug" although Davey D pointed out that all he wanted was to turn his six million fans into a voting block.

'Under the 2005 Terrorism Act I can be under suspicion for saying all these things in Beirut. There is now also the Patriot Act and other acts which can challenge us. Since the war in Iraq any corporation is frightened of criticising the government. In the US there are fifty rap songs against the war in Iraq but almost none are broadcast on radio stations.

'I can be under suspicion for saying all these things in Beirut'

When people who have the least speak against power and when people from the ghettos challenge power it changes the situation because they have no financial gain, so we must always speak truth to power. We must offer entertainment as well because this is how to gain people's ears and have influence.'

Davey D remarked on the "black thug stereotypes" prevailing in the US, the influence of right-wing radio channels such as Clear Channel, Radio 1, Disney and Fox. They are commercial producers who make the big decisions today.

The French rap artist **Clotaire K**, born to a Lebanese mother and an Egyptian father, told the conference that he makes music because he wants to express himself and reveal truths that he does not find in the media. He spoke about how he grew up in the ghettos of the South of France where hip-hop is the music that is mostly listened to. He was shocked when he heard people like Public Enemy for the first time.

'It was just people who took a microphone and just played music because they wanted to express themselves and to get their message out there. When doing this, people like Public Enemy were seeking a sort of truth that was a counterpart to what the media were speaking about and which was also at a certain point a threat to the actual American administration.

One of the reasons that pushed me to go and take a microphone is the fact that in the regular media that you can see in France, in Europe and or even in the Middle East you don't really find the truth that you are looking for and you know that there is a truth out there that you don't really hear in these media. The real power today

is the power of the media, of images. I want to try to say my own truth, to be my own media, to say things that I don't hear elsewhere.'

'One of the reasons that pushed me to go and take a microphone is the fact that in the regular media... you don't really find the truth that you are looking for and you know that there is a truth out there'

Clotaire K has been touring the world, visiting places outside the regular Western circuit. He has been giving concerts in war-torn regions and in countries characterised by social conflict. Sometimes, people have told him not to speak about these things on stage but as he says 'I was born in France; I grew up in France so I can be free and I don't want to let anyone take away that freedom from me. They say I can't talk about this or that but when I am on stage I am free. I can do what I want. And the people who are in front of us, they want to be free, too. They feel that when someone on stage feels free they can also feel free, dance and shout and do whatever they want. That is good thing because freedom is valuable.'

To end the session he cited a song he had written, saying:

'I am a lyrical soldier, my word is a bullet, and sound is my weapon. I believe that words are more powerful than regular weapons. I believe that words can scare people. That is why we have censorship. Censorship is based on fear. As long as we are alive we have to take advantage of that which freedom we think is ours.'

DISCUSSION

Several questions were put to Davey D on the role of hip-hop and how it is being used as a tool for all types of interests and how the kind of hip-hop being portrayed by the mass media seems to be very different from politically conscious hip-hop.

Davey D responded that once art becomes a commodity and you are dependant to sell, you are subject to censorship unless you set up your own infrastructure.

'I tell artists to create a following in their community before they go to radio stations and record companies. Unfortunately, many artists sell them short and take abuse because they are so eager to become popular.'

Davey D pointed out how hip-hop has come into the focus of commercial and political interests, especially in the US.

'What has happened in the US is that the most important people are the entertainers. It is not the politicians. I had Jesse Jackson on my radio programme talking about essential issues; no one called in. But if Snoop Dog is singing two songs round the corner, people flock there and are willing to pay a hundred dollars. That's the reality. There are, however, a growing number of people who are very active and "pushing the envelope". The challenge is to take these activists – some are artists – and make them normal in the life of people who have been indoctrinated by MTV and other channels,' he said.

According to Davey D there's a war going on in the US to win the hearts and the souls of the people. 'Coca Cola wanna win it, McDonalds wanna win it, they wanna give you 50,000 dollars to do a hip-hop song for them. Schools wanna use it. The President wants to use hip-hop. There is a competition going on how to get through to people and the tool is hip-hop. Ghetto stereotypes are being pushed by people who are not from the community and political hip-hop artists are kept off the airwaves,' he said.

SESSION VI: MARKET AND MEDIA DOMINANCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON MUSICAL EXPRESSION

BACKGROUND

The UN Declaration of Human Rights ensures the freedom of intellectual expression, but this does not automatically give access to an audience or media.

In the age of globalisation technology has opened new avenues for artists to disseminate their music, but at the same time regional and global media and record industries tend to market and invest in fewer artists.

Is this a problem for freedom of expression? Does market and media dominance contain elements of censorship by itself?

Many conclude that the most sinister form of censorship today is corporate censorship. While art can flourish under repressive state censorship, it cannot in an environment where big companies decide what can and what cannot be broadcasted or distributed.

Can the newly proposed UNESCO convention on cultural diversity play any role in the Middle East in terms of more varied or diversified cultural expressions from the Middle East and the rest of the world?

Are composers and musicians right to organise and negotiate the collection of royalties violated in the Middle East? How does this affect the development of the music industry?

Does the use of electronic equipment, "Bollywood videos" and aggressive marketing destroy interest in traditional music, or do modern people simply reject traditional music as being irrelevant and boring?

This session aimed at analysing, discussing and understanding trends and tendencies in the media and the music market in relationship to musical expression.

INTRODUCTION

Pierre Abi-Saab, Editor of the cultural pages of Al-Hayat newspaper & Editor-in-chief of the cultural magazine Zawayya.

Abi-Saab targeted the hypocrisy and corruption of Arab regimes who tell Europeans what they want to hear. 'Once the charm offensive is over, reality remains,' he said. 'Today we see a conflict between the people and corrupt regimes trying to oppress people. We need to open windows to express ourselves. We say we are doing it to protect ourselves from fundamentalists but our governments are oppressing us. I defend democracy and am, perhaps, closer to the Muslims in their struggle for truth. I am nostalgic for traditional censorship in Egypt and in other Arab countries, the old era of censorship.'

Abi-Saab said he did not want Marcel Khalife tried because of the lyrics he used. 'I'm happier seeing him on stage with forty thousand people applauding him. Despite being banned by the censors, the late Egyptian singer and creator of modern Arabic political song, Shaikh Imam, is still being listened to in poor neighbourhoods of Cairo and in Lebanese ghettos,' he said. 'But why are Shaikh Imam's tapes not being broadcast on satellite channels?'

(Sheikh Imam and Ahmad Fuad Najem developed the popular political song which advocates the interests of the poor and working people and gave birth to an avant-garde "hymn to justice". They were both regularly imprisoned by the Egyptian authorities).

'You speak to someone of 25 about a performance by Umm Kulthum and he doesn't know anything about it but he does, of course, know Madonna'

'True censorship today is indirect censorship', said Abi-Saab 'it's based on corruption. You can run a bar and a strip-tease club today but not a school. We live in an environment of isolation. You speak to someone of 25 about a performance by Umm Kulthum and he doesn't know anything about it but he does, of course, know Madonna. On alternative channels what is beautiful is being replaced by commodities of mere consumption. Society suffers from both political and sexual oppression. Al-Jazeera Television has tried to play along with political oppression while the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) offers superficial freedom, showing half-nude females who excite people, in the Gulf. Today people don't want to see anyone except for singers like the Lebanese singer Haifa Wehbe.

'We must', he said, 'establish broadcasting and distribution channels based on enlightened sources of capital. We must defend good taste. All those who want to cut me off from what is beautiful make me closer to others.'

STATEMENTS

Basel Kasem, Irab-Arabic Association for Music

After World War Two the US was very strong in music, said Basel Kasem, who represents Irab-Arabic Association for Music. 'Mickey Mouse', he sums up, 'defeated Stalin.'

Michael Eisner, the President of Walt Disney, helped the entertainment industry adapt to new means of expression. He promoted the idea that the US was the only place where everyone can be creative, allowing politics to mingle with culture. In the US media companies enter every home where everyone loves Batman.

Nobody cares about what the channels are offering. Annual advertising costs US \$250,000 million dollars which is the GDP of most African states.

'Mickey Mouse defeated Stalin'

US success is based on fierce competition which is in stark contrast with the inertia we see in the Arab region. Americans promote what is easy and simple. Their new world order is Madonna and Michael Jackson. This is supposed to respond to all needs but in reality the promise is a false one. Programmes are structured to attract the biggest number of viewers. Decisions are in the hands of small groups. Advertising is focused on the big companies. A 90-second advertisement costs as much as a European movie. This affects the cultural life of everyone. Pavarotti, Domingo and Carreras came closer to the shouting of the Rolling Stones in 1996 when the football stadiums could, in fact, hardly hear their words. Much money is needed for good promotion and the prevailing culture depends on money.

Arab music is criss-crossing and multi-faceted. It has inherited some theoretical genres but no historical tradition and transmission of musical notes. There is an absence of big Arab orchestras. The majority of our music is fake, limited to simplistic compositions. More complex music does not find channels for production, distribution or promotion. This is why the state must support orchestras. In our culture today we have popular and artistic music. Pop interacts with larger audiences but the artistic genre is much richer than pop and relies on cultural heritage. Arab music today is in crisis, torn between the conservatives and the extremists. Our music is a weak link; it does not express our cultural background which is why we must revive our artistic heritage and the state must provide the environment for this.

Moe Hamzeh, Producer, Artist & Music Business Executive, Temple Entertainment.

Moe Hamzeh, producer, artist and founder of Temple Entertainment and Business Executive at Virgin Mega Store, outlined the background to the development of music in the Arab region. Phases in this development were similar to those in the US. In the past there were independent labels based on music fans who could develop new products. Lebanon has played an important role. The Gulf region is under-developed while Egypt remains an important leader. The main problem is lack of legislation to protect the industry.

'The problem is that the region has the money and the media but little control of the media. It lacks legislative systems. Laws are in place but there is no application of the laws, in particular copyright laws. Government censorship continues. But first of all we must recognise the rights of the artist. Rights performance societies exist in Lebanon but these societies are corrupt. Lebanon and Egypt are only part of the market. Censorship comes from the record companies and from political and religious sources,' he said.

'Previously there were many independent channels of distribution; now there is only a handful. Heads of companies are obsessed with making money. We seek talents but the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990 played a major role in destroying this source of talent. Companies were unable to survive the fallout from the war. The aftermath of the war saw the emergence of Saudi businessmen who were interested in art and music and who took financial control of the music industry. Small Saudi companies disappeared or were marginalised. The new big companies bought the catalogues of these small companies.

'In the Arab region there is only one major company and there are almost no independents'

In the US and Europe there has been a conflict between the major companies which represent 65 per cent of the market and the independents who make up 35 per cent of the market.

In the Arab region, however, there is only one major company and there are almost no independents.

The region needs several independent companies to accommodate artists.

The companies say that people want entertainment, not politics, but this experience shows a huge demand for other types of music. Meanwhile, most companies are making a big loss (they are making their profits elsewhere).

The key to the marketing discussion should be the question of legislation and the rights of writers. In the US the majors (having bought out the independents) are not surviving; they now depend on the independents to bring back new lyrics. Traditionally, the independents were the wheel for the creation of new business. Then these were eaten up by the big companies. Now no content remains, so everyone is going back to the independent labels.'

DISCUSSION

Summing up this debate, Reitov noted that 30 years ago the majors started amalgamating. They were the big sisters. The result is that we don't have a music industry any more. We have vertical integration. The companies control everything.

Clear Channel, for example, operates in three segments: Radio Broadcasting, Outdoor Advertising, and Live Entertainment. The Radio Broadcasting segment owns, programs, and sells airtime. It also operates nearly 1,200 radio stations. The Outdoor Advertising segment owns or operates advertising display faces domestically and internationally. The Live Entertainment segment engages in the promotion, production, and operation of venues for live entertainment events. It produces various events, including music concerts, theatrical shows, museum exhibitions, and specialised sporting events.

The question of publishing rights is interesting. Companies control the rights of composers 70 years after his or her death. They buy and sell songs. The owner of copyright can decide how this will be used. The US wants to see music as ordinary products. These corporations control music, media, hotels, everything.

Regarding the copyright system, the question is how do we re-organise it? It is a basic human right. In many countries artists are not even allowed to organise themselves; Syria, for example, enjoys few human rights.

Moe Hamzeh said the company Fanoun, owned by a Saudi prince, has bought up Egypt's entire cinema archive. It is risky, he says, for our future to be in the hands of just one person. If we had three major companies, it would be OK; or if there were shareholders. The aim of the big companies is to sign up every artist, whether good or bad, in the region.

Marcel Khalife said that although he played all over the Middle East to audiences of 15,000, because of piracy he sold comparably few CDs and that people took advantage of the situation. 'We need a mechanism', he said, 'to solve the problem. You can buy good CDs in Beirut's Virgin Megastore but many people are buying cheap copies.' He says he has four music compositions on Arab television where he does not benefit financially, so what chance does a newcomer have?

(On the same evening, on the way to the theatre, participants passed by a shop on Hamra Street which advertised an event, using the very song Marcel Khalife had spoken of).

Bashar Shammout reflected on Moe's anxieties, reiterating the importance of independent labels and the danger of one company, like Rotana, controlling the industry; a huge elephant in a China shop. 'Why did Rotana not support this Freemuse event? It is our duty to help Rotana raise awareness.' His own company is based in Germany and he feels a cultural duty to raise awareness. On the copyright issue we must distinguish between material and intellectual copyright and organise campaigns to raise awareness.

His company's slogan is, "Copying kills music". If people realise this when they buy pirated CDs, they may not do it. Ole Reitov said that in some parts of India the police had confiscated pirated copies. Fighting piracy is only possible in many countries when it becomes a police priority.

Salman Ahmad said that Pakistan had no concept of royalty payments. You are simply paid for the live performance. Intellectual property, he said, must have value if one is to negotiate with a corporation. His last album sold five million copies, representing three per cent of Pakistan's population of 150 million. In Pakistan you can only make a profit if you retain the copyright but license the song for a specific campaign. A new model needs to be evolved whereby a songwriter retains his copyright but chooses not to sell through just one entity.

Moe Hamzeh agreed with Salman Ahmad that legislation already exists but said there should be an additional law that controls the artist's relationship with the company.

Why, he asked, does Rotana face no competition? They offer over-the-top for contracts but are not making any money. Rotana pay up to US \$300,000 for one video; Moe Hamzeh said he can sign up ten artists for that sum and put the records into Europe as well. They can sign Madonna and make money in Europe, but in the Arab countries piracy represents 50-75 per cent of the market.

In Syria and North Africa it represents one hundred per cent. Pirates will sell for as little as 50 cents to undercut you. This is barely enough money to live on.

Ahmad Al-Khatib said that during the first (Palestinian) Intifada, when Suhail Khoury was head of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, the Intifada song was printed in Tel Aviv. At an Israeli check-point the tapes were confiscated; then they appeared as cheap, pirated copies on the market.

Mark LeVine said the discussion had moved from political to economic censorship. When he started playing the blues no-one thought of making money from records. He and his group simply made money from touring. 'It is unfortunately easier for the corporations to benefit from royalties than it is for the artists.'

SESSION VII: BREAKING THE WAVES

BACKGROUND

'The more people already agree upon or share a particular idea, the more easily a newcomer will, in turn, be converted to that idea, and the more difficult it will be for one already converted to reject that idea' (Kelley, 1967). Censorship is damaging music. But how about self-censorship?

Is conformity an important aspect of self-censorship? And what is cultural conformity?

Let us put three images in our heads:

IMAGE ONE

Coca-Cola's famous 1970's ad that had children representing cultures from around the world singing together (and, of course, drinking Coke) symbolises the tendency of globalisation to discount or caricature cultural difference while reducing individuals to the status of potential consumers.

IMAGE TWO

The controversial Afghan TV station, TOLO, in 2005 launched an Afghan version of Idols. To some it is seen as a "small victory". To others another example of global TV conformity and to the Taliban it represents another example of Western decadence.

The questions for this session are: How to break the conformity? How do society, the media, the music industry and others respond to those breaking conformity? Does the Muslim world have its own dominant cultural conformity? If so, how does it differ from western conformity?

IMAGE THREE

'Women is the nigger of the world' – was a statement that John Lennon and Yoko Ono put forward some decades ago. Whereas the social and economical situation has improved for some women in some countries, it seems that the situation has become worse in others.

Focussing on female musicians we see two very opposite trends within the Islamic World.

On the one hand: the strong, successful and respected female artists from Mali who are not only successful in their region but are amongst the biggest names in "world music" (e.g. Rokia Traoré and Omou Sangare) and, on the other hand, the appalling situation for female artists in Iran and Pakistan.

How come that a region that hailed Umm Kulthum and Fairuz is now experiencing serious attacks – not only for artists but even for critics? How are women discriminated and how does this influence our cultural heritage?

'When a woman has her work exposed, people believe it is because she is sleeping with the director'

BREAKING THE ROLE: FEMALE MUSCIANS

SPEAKER

Diana Moukalled, Journalist, Future TV

PANEL

Mahsa Vahdat, Singer

Joelle Khoury, Composer & Musician

Mohamad Malas, Film Director

Excerpt of 'The Passion' by Mohamad Malas

Diana Moukalled was brought up as a child in Saudi Arabia and told the conference about how dancing and music had been a very sensitive subject in her years of school. Many of the teachers assured their students that singing and dancing were not Islamic and were even a sin.

Once she and her classmates were training to dance at a graduation party in Jeddah, the principal would supervise their training to make sure that all their moves were decent according to the Islamic dress code.

Diana had chosen a song from the Bee Gees for the graduation party but the teacher had translated the words and asked them to change the song, arguing that it didn't comply with the school's culture and religion.

At the graduation party the girls danced, but very carefully, in order not to make any move that might disturb the principal. Diana resisted her desire to move with the music on stage.

She told the conference how a sense of guilt had followed her for a long time since when she danced, sang or even listened to music.

'We kept on listening and dancing at our gatherings anyway but the shade of guilt was always there.'

Diana moved back to Lebanon in 1986 and started a different life there, training to be a reporter and TV producer. As a journalist she has covered sensitive topics, in particular those touching religion and tradition. She believes that her experience in Saudi Arabia has enriched her knowledge for when she covers sensitive subjects.

In the last few years a new wave of songs and female pop singers has appeared before the eyes of and in the minds of many conservative circles. The emergence of this new and growing trend in the Middle East has turned the strict principles many were raised on upside down.

*'Singing no longer depends on a good voice and the capacity to compose;
it's all about sexy looks'*

The new phenomenon is singers with beauty and charm; beautiful bodies, soft eyes and other attributes. Singing no longer depends on a good voice and the capacity to compose; it's all about sexy looks. Some have accepted the phenomena but conservatives condemn the clips as pornography.

Before this new wave people used to tolerate female singers because of the classical songs and decent video-clips they had. But for many people this new wave is revolutionary, not in its music and lyrics, but in its video-clips and in its message which challenges the conventional beliefs of many Muslims.

Diana Moukalled showed the conference a few clips from two films she had made on the phenomena, one in Egypt and one in Lebanon. She discovered how serious the impact of these new singers was on the young. 'These young singers symbolise the contradiction that is lived by many in the Arab and Islamic World,' she said.

Lebanon, in particular, has seen many of these new female singers, and songs of some of these singers have been banned in Egypt and Kuwait. Conservatives say that they are being invaded by Lebanon, that taboos are being destroyed and that traditional Arab society is being damaged.

At the same time there is tacit admiration for these clips and people attend the concerts while others fear nude bodies becoming part of daily Arab life. 'You turn on television today', says Diana Moukalled, 'and you have naked bodies on one channel and Iraq on the other. Some parents forbid their children to watch on the grounds that it is against tradition.'

'Some argue that it is a necessary reaction to sexual frustration; others that it helps women liberate themselves.' Moukalled is not in favour of banning these clips; she argues that a better way to counteract them is to produce alternative images, and that no matter what you think of them they have started a needed debate in the Arab world.

Mahsa Vahdat from Iran talked about the conditions for female musicians in Iran today and throughout history. Under the Qajars (Persian dynasty, 1795-1925) female singers could not appear in public. They could only sing religious songs in the Andarouni, the harem palace of the Qajars. In 1922 the first female concert with the famous pre-revolutionary singer Delkash took place but after the concert she was taken to the police station and ordered not to appear in public.

Restrictions on women singers were temporarily relaxed during the modernisation era (1910-1978) and the Pahlavi period ushered in by Reza Khan was the main period of transformation, allowing female musicians to appear in public. A new music conservatoire trained many female musicians and women's voices were popular on television and radio. Singers like Googoosh, Haidar and Pareesa soon emerged. Many of these distinguished female singers are now considered part of the country's cultural heritage.

'Female singers who stayed had to make written promises not to sing in public'

After the Revolution in 1979 restrictions increased and many singers left. Female singers who stayed had to make written promises not to sing in public. Schools of music were closed for a decade, musicians were forbidden employment in the public sector and there were law enforcement crackdowns on private musical gathering. Soon, however, pop music was being distributed illegally.

In 1986 music still had no official standing and in 1989 there was another crackdown on female voices. In 1999 women started performing underground but were raided by the police. Today, female groups are less threatened by the moral police than mixed groups. Ironically, many husbands envy wives being able to attend concerts which they themselves cannot attend. In the 1997 presidential election Khatami won the presidential elections with women's support and controls were relaxed, but then they were tightened up again.

Today in Iran, women can practice various musical forms but they cannot sing. The post-revolutionary order decided early on that the solo voice of a woman should not be heard by men. It is interesting that no official decree has ever been issued in this regard, but once women try to exercise their right to sing solo, they are prevented from doing so.

There are ways for women singers to appear on public stages. They can participate in for-women-only concerts, some of which the Ministry of Culture organises annually. They can also sing in the company of a male singer or as part of a choir.

'We may ask whether, after the Revolution, any women have been trained whose main profession was singing, and if so, in what way? Many women in Iran today are involved with music in one way or another and they have appeared in various capacities in published works.

Some women have chosen to focus on music education. In Iran, there is no educational planning or academic training for singers, be they women or men. The only opportunity for a singing enthusiast is the private institutions most of which are concentrated in big cities. Additionally, female students who want to pursue a career in music have to convince their parents of the legitimacy of their pursuit. Considering these social factors, it becomes clear that obstacles facing women's music in Iran are uncompromising. As such, many musical talents are going unnoticed or being suppressed, depriving the world of an important source of musical fertility,' she said.

Joelle Khoury said 'being a human being is in itself difficult. Being an artist is doubly difficult. He has to be the actor and observer at the same time. For a woman to be an artist is much more difficult. Most societies have an implicit double system of morals and values by which they judge men and women.

We are not judged on an equal basis. When a man expresses his sexual desires he is regarded as strong and manly. If a woman expresses the same desires she is considered vulgar.

When a married man spends a lot of time and energy at his work, he is regarded a good family man. If a married woman works hard, she is regarded as a bad mother, a bad housewife and selfish.

When a male composer has his music played by an orchestra, he is considered an accomplished composer. When a woman has her work performed, people believe it is because she is sleeping with the director.

'As long as she is a body she is something that can be consumed by society'

When a man writes soft nice, cute music they think this is a nice, sensitive man. If a woman writes complicated music, they say she is trying to prove something, that she is trying to be a man, and if she doesn't look like a man then they will say that it is complicated, so probably it is not good. If they are a bit smarter they may dismiss her on the grounds that she is someone they don't want to deal with.

These are thoughts I've had to deal with when I compose. Society is nicer to women who use their bodies. As long as she is a body a woman is something that can be consumed by society. Also it is more accepted when women sing than when they play instruments. And the more complicated the instruments a woman uses the more complicated it gets. It bothers people a lot if she is not just a body. That's one of the reasons why there are not so many (women) composers. Apart from the question of being creative we have to deal with all these issues.'

The Syrian film-maker **Mohamad Malas**' haunting film 'Passion,' about a woman who is punished with a terrible fate for her innocent love of song, was shown to the conference. Malas lives under a totalitarian regime which has controlled all expression since the present regime came to power.

'The regime... has devised a new strategy which is not to prohibit but to prevent events from happening from the start'

'I will not talk about music, but about expression. I will only talk about Syria, but it is a model for many Arab countries with totalitarian regimes,' he said. 'The result of forty years of totalitarian regimes is that they have controlled all means of expression and everything has to be censored through the regimes. But the censorship officer is not the problem; it is the regime that is the problem.'

The regime has difficulties in controlling everything today, so it has devised a new strategy which is not to prohibit but to prevent events from happening from the start. In Syria there are no opportunities to achieve projects. Creativity remains trapped inside you. The regime controls the means of expression. 'We are an ancient microbus', says Malas, 'that seems to be outside the present era. We have some contact with the world but we are essentially outside it.'

'Syria', says Malas, 'has traditions inherited from the Age of Jahiliyya (Ignorance) and from the period of Ottoman occupation. It has made no progress. We pay no attention to Islamic values but political repression has made these values thrive. Today', he says, 'the absence of opportunities and assassination are the tools the regime uses to prevent free expression.'

DISCUSSION

Davey D noted that many media organisations target female audiences. So do these sexually explicit videos shown appeal to women. 'Why are many of these videos produced by women?' he asked.

Serene Huleileh said that audiences are teenage women and that the message being delivered to men is that she reveals everything but the men cannot have her. What we see as degrading for women, girls see as liberating.

Davey D named Little Kim, Foxy Brown and Madonna in this context, explaining that the subliminal message was, 'I can't have you but I see you twenty-four hours a day so if I can't have you I will take you. The end result is this dysfunctionality in the US between men and women. You have this increasing amount of women who believe that it is their body and not their mind that is important.'

Moe Hamzeh said that audiences are women; when you ask the TV people they agree with this. 'When I go out to a restaurant I meet a lot of women who want to be like the Lebanese singer Haifa (Wehbe) and others. They even have plastic surgery done in order to look like singers such as Haifa and it is a major problem that people in the Arab countries are not educated enough on these issues.'

Joelle Khoury responded that in such an environment it is difficult for her to be seen as an intellectual.

Layla Al-Zubaidi noted that in Iran the female voice is forbidden, but that the case of Joelle was completely different. So has this anything to do with Islam at all?

Khoury felt that there is no law prohibiting women to compose, but the environment is implicit.

Kirsten Maas was disturbed by the fact that, when she travelled in neighbouring countries she learned that the picture that people have of Lebanon is that of the sexual videos. It gives a strange image of Lebanese women. She felt that Joelle Khoury very precisely had put it down to sexuality and to the issue of sexual ownership.

Sahar Taha, a singer and exiled journalist of Iraqi origin working in Lebanon contributed to the discussion, saying that Iraqi women always have responsibility for the family but are treated as inferiors.

Women singers are the worst treated of all. Ironically between the 1930's and 1970's there were twice as many women singers as men. Despite modern technology in Iraq today and so-called democracy, there are no women singing in Iraq. Women have no voice, she said, neither in singing nor in music.

Women are the first victims in Iraq. When men were at the front she was always at home to feed her family; she gave up ideas and ideology to creatively bring up her family. While husbands were fighting, there were no innovative women singers. She believes that social censorship is more dangerous than government censorship.

Women are accused of being unethical. They are degraded and humiliated. Men and women both fear playing any musical instrument. Society does not respect women singers. Singers are considered like prostitutes. She quoted a policeman saying to a woman artist, 'I apologise for the term, but you are a prostitute.' Sahar Taha said she always refuses interviews because she is afraid that her family will be exposed to violence, kidnapping and terrorism. 'I have adopted self-censorship to protect my family.' She concluded the discussion with a song.

BREAKING CONFORMITY

SPEAKER

Joelle Khoury, Composer & Musician

PANEL

Ashraf Al-Awamleh, Event maker

Clotaire K, Rapper

Joelle Khoury introduced the session by playing one of her compositions and put the question: What is it like to be a non-traditional artist?

'I want to raise the question why people sometimes react to non-traditional art in a bad way? What is it that bothers us about anything that is different from ourselves?' asked Khoury.

She believes that it is very hard to be a non-traditional person in general; that it is not just something that goes with art and music. 'If you pay attention to the people who try to tell you what it means to play good music, if you let people get into your head and try telling you that you have to conform, they can mess with your head. They will suddenly try to get into your life and will try to tell you how you should think, talk, walk, smile and eat. They will go on and tell you what it's like to be a woman even though they are not women themselves. Or what it is like to be a man. So we are always trying to justify ourselves.

It is not that we don't like what is different but every time we see a new set of values we are confronted with the responsibility of having to reassert our own convictions to ourselves. So we have to re-evaluate our convictions and the way we act and think every day. This is not easy because suppose we suddenly realise that what we have been doing for years is not necessarily the hippest or smartest thing to do. If we do realise this that means that we have to make a lot of effort. We will have to go through a lot of stress not even knowing if we will get a positive result in the end.'

The Misrepresenting of Ourselves

'For you I had to unlearn to do the Debke (traditional Middle Eastern folk dance). And now you ask me why I don't play the Debke.'

By this paradox Joelle Khoury moved ahead to what she classifies as a more Middle Eastern issue or, indeed, a local issue. She spoke about the difficulties of getting the financial means to produce non-traditional music.

The Ministry of Culture has certainly not been very efficient in supporting artists for a while and for many reasons. And there are not many local organisations supporting this type of music in Lebanon. So artists often go to the local offices of foreign organisations.

'We are confronted with the dilemma of going to foreign organisations to seek financial help. Many of them have helped me, so this is not the point. But what happens is that they usually ask me this: 'Why should we help you?' Nobody does anything for free so if they are going to help me they want to be able to show me off in some way. It is often the case that they have to show that they have helped someone from the Third World, so I have to look like somebody from the Third World. So suddenly we have to look Lebanese which means that we have to include something folkloric in our performance; something obviously superficially folkloric about ourselves.

Often we don't do this so we don't get the help but sometimes we do it and we get the help but we do it just in order to get the help. This is very dangerous on the personal level because it is very schizophrenic in a way. It is also very dangerous for our tradition because we apparently are trying to promote our tradition, let's say it's Debke. But actually we are not because the desire was not real and deep. So we do something very superficial based on our tradition.'

'We cannot cheat ourselves and still be attached to values that are not here anymore'

Khoury remembers when she was young and going to a French School. They spoke Arabic when playing in the courtyard but were told not to. It was not hip. They were told they should only speak French.

'And today these same people who taught me to speak French and from whom I am seeking help, tell me , 'No, no, how do you speak French so well? You should go and play the Debke.' But for you I had to unlearn how to do the Debke. Now I have to act as if I know the Debke, and I don't. I really don't have anything against the French or the Debke, but I have this idea about misrepresenting ourselves.

We cannot cheat ourselves and still be attached to values that are not here anymore. I love the Debke but I can only be conscious about it from a very secondary standpoint because it's gone today. It is not here anymore. This thing about trying to be Arab or not trying to be Arab (is the problem). I am really in support of the freedom of the individual trying to be whoever they wish to be.'

Khoury argues that this actually puts tradition in danger. 'We expose large parts of ourselves just to get funding. This increases our cultural problem.'

Ashraf Al-Awamleh said that the regimes are afraid of the beat generation. In the US the censor fears pressure from political leaders whom the masses support. There is an environment of fear. 'The Beat generation gave way to Nixon and Vietnam and we fear the same changes here in the Arab world,' he said.

Being an event-maker, he had spent two months in prison. 'We used to criticise the government; we used to use a mix of languages so the censors didn't understand us. I became like a scapegoat and was arrested. The regimes are afraid of those breaking with conformity.'

Al-Awamleh said that there are people who are worried by change, either for religious or political reasons. Through censorship they try to prevent things before they happen.

Clotaire K uses oriental melodies in his music. People complained to him that hip-hop should be American and this is Arabic and that through fusion he was breaking with traditional music. But he also recognises a new interest in Arabic music in the West where there are, for example, many belly-dancing classes today.

He tells foreign journalists that nothing has changed in the streets of Beirut as a result of the new sexy video-clips and reminds them that boys hold hands as of custom, not because of video-clips or because they are gay. Audiences like beat music and heavy metal, some of which is influenced by Indian chants and by Maqamat.

He said that 13 million Lebanese live outside Lebanon but are still strongly attracted by modern Lebanese music.

BREAKING THE SOUND: HEAVY METAL – A THREAT FROM HELL?

BACKGROUND

Certain types of Western music are highly controversial in some countries of the region, being perceived by some as a symbol of Western decadence and a catalyst for the breakdown of moral values. Heavy metal, heavy rock and other types of rock music known for its often aggressive expression have even been considered the tool of the Devil and the musicians and their audiences have been charged for being promoters of Satan.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation's Layla Al-Zubaidi introduced this session. In Egypt in 1997, she said, students were arrested by the Interior Ministry and accused of being worshippers of the devil and being financed by a foreign state. Religious authorities (Muslim and Christian) joined in a campaign against these young people, and soon even turned their anger on the government; extending their accusations towards "other worshippers of the devil" and pointing at political and economic corruption within the ruling circles. Musicians in Morocco and Lebanon were similarly accused.

'Who feels threatened by heavy metal?' asked Layla Al-Zubaidi. 'And what is so offensive about it; the music, the way it is performed, its icons, the lyrics with references to religion and death, or because of band names such as Immortal Spirit, Killerzone, or Nightmare, for example? On the other hand: Why is heavy metal so attractive for young people? The member of a Lebanese rock band once said. 'We constantly asked ourselves how Arab performers could sing about romance when so many people are killed daily in our region.' Do the affairs around this music therefore pinpoint at some of the most sensitive antagonisms between society, religious forces, the state, and the demands of young people for change?'

'A journalist started the campaign against us and others followed.

The articles were frightening.

*They said we were a sect of devil-worshippers,
that we were cannibals and were ferocious'*

INTRODUCTION

Réda Zine, Musician

Mark LeVine, Associate Professor and Musician

TESTIMONIES

Amine Hamma, Musician

Moe Hamzeh, Producer, Artist & Music Business Executive, Temple Entertainment.

In Morocco in March 2003, 14 supposed “devil worshippers” received jail sentences ranging from three months to one year for ‘undermining the Muslim faith’ and ‘possessing objects contrary to good morals.’ Nine of the men, who were aged between 21 and 36, belonged to local heavy metal bands – Nekros, Infected Brain, Reborn – and the rest were fans and one was the Egyptian manager of a Coffee House. Among the objects exhibited in court as being contrary to good morals were black T-shirts with heavy metal symbols on it, CDs, posters and an ashtray shaped as a skull. This prompted the judge to comment that ‘normal people go to concerts in a suit and tie.’

Réda Zine with **Amine Hamma** organise together with others the independent annual independent festival ‘Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens’ in Casablanca which presents young bands from Morocco and other countries that play rock/metal, rap/hip-hop and fusion/oriental. Réda Zine said that when playing music they had looked deep into their heritage, seeking deep lyrics and wanting to develop their oral heritage. ‘We had ambitions to play music rather than do rock. We hoped to produce songs as good as, even better than Jimi Hendrix. We were influenced by groups that were the first groups to play black and heavy metal in America. We wanted the Moroccan public to know about our music.’

For more than ten years, they did find places to play and an audience but only until the scandal hit them when they were accused of being advocates of the devil.

*‘We were victims of a wave of phobia against the West in Morocco after 9/11...
If you had long hair you were suddenly considered a worshipper of the devil
or a homosexual’*

‘In January 2003 a journalist started the campaign against us and others followed. The articles were frightening. They said we were a sect of devil-worshippers, that we were cannibals and were ferocious. For them it was a scoop; for us it was frightening. We did not know what the authorities were going to do. We were victims of a wave of phobia against the West in Morocco after 9/11. There was a new discourse; people were becoming strict about our relationship with the West. If you had long hair you were suddenly considered a worshipper of the devil or a homosexual.’

To get his son out of jail, every father had to pull strings and use all the contacts he could think of. Fathers had to have collective funds to release their sons. The liberal, leftist media tried to support the students who, for their part, tried to inform people through alternative media channels.

‘There was a news blackout and some journalists were making up all kind of stories and did not care what happened to the musicians.’

When marginalised by the authorities, you need the help of the press. The Islamists said our festivals were a futile desire for corruption and decadence but for us the festivals were fulfilling anthropological needs and a tool to raise civil consciousness to conquer the public sphere in face of the lethargy of the system.’

The historian and author of 'Why They Don't Hate Us,' **Mark LeVine**, said that this was the best conference he had attended.

First of all, he explained, we need to understand that the idea of "heavy metal" means many different things in varying contexts. Some bands, like Immortal Spirits or even Junoon, don't play heavy metal, as they don't use the symbolism, attitude or aesthetic codes that have always defined the genre. Yet there are Muslim metal groups who can sound quite similar to their "Western" counterparts, although they are in fact usually much more hybrid in their styles, mixing together traditional metal with other styles, including those from their own cultures. But most important is that whereas in the West heavy metal artists were among the least political artists (compared with hip-hop or folk or many rock activists), in the Muslim World metal, like hip-hop, is often quite politicised.

A primary reason for this is likely that the metal artists here are much better educated and even intelligent than the average American metal musicians or fan (although this changed in the 1990's when thrash and hardcore crossed with punk and hip-hop and became more overtly political as epitomised by bands like Rage Against the Machine). But whereas someone like Zack Della Rocha is an exception in the US, his level of social knowledge and critique is more the norm in rock in the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed, pointing to his fellow panellists, LeVine explained that they comprise an MD, a soon-to-be Ph.D., and another graduate student. 'There is more brainpower among these three guys', he said to loud applause, 'than in the entire history of heavy metal in the whole of America.'

'We also need to understand that heavy metal represents a cultural-aesthetic response to a situation of political and economic oppression and/or exploitation. While not everyone in Morocco or Iraq, for example, may like, play or regularly listen to heavy metal, their own forms of protests often correspond quite closely to the "rituals" of the metal "experience".'

For example, LeVine had passed around the conference some pictures from his book 'Why They Don't Hate Us.' The first was of an elderly yet militant Ayatollah from Najaf, Iraq, who loved having his picture taken with his Kalashnikov and spewed out angry sermons that along with the imagery of blood reminded him of the original gangsta rap. Indeed, he explained, Moqtada Al-Sadr, the young firebrand preacher, fills many of the same functions – positive and negative – as the young rappers like NWA and Public Enemy filled for their constituents/fans when they started out. As an Iraqi Shii preacher named Anwar Al-Ethari explained to LeVine, 'When we get together and pump our fists and bang drums and chant loudly and angrily, we are doing heavy metal.'

Yet other metal groups, like the collectives that fellow panellists Réda Zine and Amine Hamma helped create in Morocco, are much more positive, against violence and politically progressive. Needless to say, it was for that very reason that the Moroccan government went after the metal scene and arrested over a dozen musicians and fans on accusations of "Satan worship". The very hybridity of their identities, the ability to fuse the best of an array of cultures and sounds and politics together into something new presents a clear challenge to the officially sanctioned identity of the country.

'We play heavy metal because our lives are heavy metal'

Salman Ahmad's work with Junoon did something quite similar, which is why it too has been attacked yet remains very popular among young people. As Zine explains, quoting one of the founders of his country's metal scene, 'we play heavy metal because our lives are heavy metal.'

What the varying responses and popularity of metal and other popular music styles that merge so-called “Western” and local sounds shows is that religion and pop culture today are feeding on much the same desire and needs, and can have incredible power when brought together. Because of this, LeVine argued, artists need to make the music positive. Pointing to a picture from his book of a group of Palestinian children dancing the national dance, the Debke, he explained why they were dancing to a song in celebration of hand grenades. As the head of the community center where they were rehearsing explained, if he played something neutral they’d never leave the street.

Even as he struggled to inculcate a message of non-violent resistance to these children the realities of their lives made violent imagery a necessary conduit for their education.

In this sense, the music of the artists at the conference, particularly Ahmad, Zine, Clotaire K and others, reflects a positive development that could have quite important social consequences in the long term if it’s not censored by either the government or the increasingly powerful transnational Arab media conglomerates, who have little use for such activist music unless it sells millions of records. Yet they represent perhaps some of the best examples of globalisation as a positive force.

‘The artists, here, and the theologians and activists who are willing to push the boundaries of accepted political and social norms, are our fountains of hope’

LeVine once had been to Beirut’s Club Acid until three in the morning which had shown him what Beirut had to offer. ‘In Beirut’s gay clubs’, he said, ‘Shi’i and Christian girls are seen dancing together. All sorts of boundaries – sexual, national, sectarian, ideological – are crossed in popular youth culture, and Freemuse should encourage this or at least help us understand its implications.’

But ultimately they remain a small minority of the huge population of the region.

The crucial question in a society like Lebanon is, ‘can we get the metal heads or club kids into dialog with their peers who have taken a very different life path, joining Hezbollah instead of a rock band? It seems a daunting challenge, but the reality is that if we can’t get them to come together then there is no hope. The artists, here, and the theologians and activists who are willing to push the boundaries of accepted political and social norms, are our fountains of hope,’ he said.

The Moroccan musician **Amine Hamma** played a central role in building the underground scene of alternative and avant-garde music in Morocco. In 1996 he started his band Immortal Spirit, and later also played in Barry and the Survivors and Reborn. He was singer, composer, then bass and guitar player. He and his partner Réda Zine’s philosophy was a sort of DIY (Do It Yourself).

They had early problems such as loud drums which neighbours didn’t like and had to find a studio for rehearsing. They had to make sacrifices in time and money. Rock in Casablanca emerged from inspiration from industrialised cities like Paris, London and Stockholm.

The exception in Morocco was hip-hop which developed in the small city of Meknes. There was also the H-Kayn band which fused traditional with Western music and was inspired by artists such as 2Pac and NWA (Niggaz with Attitude) to produce a new, original sound.

Hamma outlined the history of heavy metal from its origins in Birmingham; Black Sabbath, considered as the first heavy metal band, produced its first album in 1970. Their guitarist was wounded and then tuned his guitar down to a hellish sound. Hamma discussed the popular influence of horror literature on heavy metal, citing groups such as Mayu Baba and George Romeo.

'In Morocco the new music reflected social movements, ecology and international conflict'

In Morocco the new music reflected social movements, ecology and international conflict (including nuclear conflict). This was even reflected in horror movies, which could be political. His band Immortal Spirits sought a new direction in 2001, the band included a rapper from the Casablanca suburbs. It was a revolutionary, poetic, cult band with a new sound aiming at presenting the music at the 4th edition of Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens. With a flavour of heavy metal the music was inspired by ragga, reggae and gnawa music. By mixing different styles the group couldn't be put in a certain category but "survived" six months of success in the underground movement.

Immortal Spirit and Nekros had concerts with other bands. Their first gig sold out. They were hit by bottles and the words 'We don't want this kind of music.' Singing was in Arabic. Their singer Barry was attacked.

It was political, social, esoteric music seeking a cultural identity and challenging globalisation. The question asked was 'How can rock play a protest role in Islamic society?'

In 2004 they invited an Algerian metal band to play with them. Hinting at the conflict between Morocco and Algeria, they played the tune 'War for Territory' (originally by the Brazilian band Sepultura). Referring to the "Satanist affair" on their T-shirts they had written, 'Forgive but not forget.'

Réda Zine and Amine Hamma showed the conference a film clip of a girl rock group, Mystic Moods, a very rare concept in Morocco. Voices in the audience were shouting, 'Fuck you. Fuck you.' The girls' slogan was 'Let's make music and not bombs'.

The Moroccans said that they need a cultural policy provided by the Moroccan State which at present 'offers us nothing'. This failure is what turns musicians into extremists, they told the conference.

Moe Hamzeh is the Virgin Megastore product manager in Beirut and performs with his rock band the Kordz at the Club Nova in Beirut. He discussed the censorship in Lebanon of heavy metal. After Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain committed suicide, a young man in Beirut killed himself.

He may simply have had family problems but his father was an important general in the Lebanese army. The government discovered that the young man had Nirvana CDs and wore black clothes, so they decided that he must have been influenced by Kurt Cobain.

The police went to music stores to ask what the CDs were that people bought. The General Security apparatus created a black list of bands, even including Pink Floyd. Young people wearing black and going to clubs were interrogated at the Ministry of Defence.

'They said that modern music was calling on young people to commit suicide and was paying tribute to Satan. Pictures were found about life after death, terror movies, pentagrams and goats. These were considered Satanic. Some things were allowed; others were tightened up. In 2003 a kid died from an overdose. He was from an eminent school and high society and a new campaign against musicians were launched. There were mentions of black masses, cemeteries and Satanic rituals. People were interrogated about their friends.'

'We were called to the office responsible for fighting terrorism and crime'

'We were called to the office responsible for fighting terrorism and crime,' said Moe Hamzeh. 'The security officer invited us for a cup of coffee. We were punctual and well dressed. We arrived at eight in the morning sharp and waited until ten. Then they said they were busy and we should come back tomorrow. We were angry but did not want a confrontation. The lawyers told us not to sign anything. The following day we were taken to a room with sound-proofed walls and a glass window where someone was watching us.'

It was like in a movie. I was in charge. They asked, 'Do you adore Satan? Do you play Hotel California? Do you play California Dreaming?' We told them that our musicians were playing music rather than joining militias. They kept asking, 'The people coming to your club are they devil-worshippers? What do you mean by the strange way you dress, your loose T-shirts and earrings?' They asked us about our posters of Dali's paintings. They did not beat us but there were six hours of investigation.

Then, when we performed they wanted to film our performance. The chief investigator even came to me at the end of the performance and congratulated me on my nice voice.'

DISCUSSION

Jonas Otterbeck referred to an interview he had read with a Turkish heavy metal band who had said, 'We worked hard on finding an anti-Muslim symbol but could not find one.' They found a crescent but it did not look too good. 'Are there bands who are consciously experimenting with finding words or symbols, trying to find symbols that are provocative and turn things upside down?' he wondered.

Hamma said that when they were arrested the police took their black T-shirts, some with symbols, but also shirts with Pink Floyd. For the police it was all satanic.

Referring to the film-clip Réda Zine said the festival they were running had the idea of being a festival for free. 'When we went to court we noticed that there were no music experts who could analyse the music and the philosophy. For ten years, due to religious studies, philosophy was prohibited at universities in Morocco, so education naturally played an essential role.'

May Ghossoub wondered whether the girls had continued to play.

Hamma said that they had continued.

'Analysing censorship, we need to look at power dynamics'

Davey D said that throughout history there's been this battle for power. Usually when censorship comes, it comes from religion and governments, who normally have the power over the crowd. Then when you have artists that come out of religion and get the crowd, this is when you have the censorship coming out. It's a question of power. In the US you see problems with people in the church if people want to rap the Bible. 'When analysing censorship', he said, 'we need to look at power dynamics. It is not a question of symbols, but power.'

Moe Hamzeh said, 'We live in the world of transnational media but the difference is that our music does not go abroad. We have problems with visas and problems with production. In terms of the relationship between music and the state, of course there's a political problem. When youth do not have space it leads to violence. We need space to express ourselves and we need a cultural policy provided by the state. When your country does not offer you anything you tend to go to extremes.'

Mark LeVine said that the Moroccan government had used religious parties to support the arrests after the concert, but that the religious parties later admitted to him that they had made an error in supporting the government making these arrests.

Referring to the girl band, Davey D said that rap artists fear that women might take the crowd from the traditional men who are holding it. 'Old school rappers do not like new rappers.'

SESSION VIII: MUSIC CENSORSHIP WORLDWIDE

The perspective from Freemuse

Ole Reitov summed up the situation of music censorship worldwide. Religious movements play a major role in suppressing music, he said. In the US the “moral majority” – Christian lobby groups – have enormous influence. Nigeria suffers the dual problem of Islamic extremism in the North and Pentecostalism influence in the South. Zambia shares the same problem. In Africa, Christianity and Islam are vying with each other for control of hearts and minds. Reitov argues that The West tends not to criticise Saudi Arabia, where there is a big censorship problem because it has oil, which the industrialised world needs.

There are big censorship problems in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria and there is an increasing tendency towards nationalism everywhere but particularly in the former Soviet republics.

In China, he remarked, we say that the silence is being broken, but the big search engine companies are making deals with China to exclude web pages that threaten Beijing’s political control. We say that China is liberalising but it is doing this from a position of total control. Many countries are commercially dependent on China and when rights are abused they tend to look the other way.

The situation in Zimbabwe is very serious. Freemuse ran a workshop in Zimbabwe at the end of April 2005. The government of Zimbabwe has complete control of the media. The former Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo, controlled not only the output of music but he even made attempts to take over the control of the largest record company of the country.

‘We love Cuban music but the situation in Cuba is very serious’, said Reitov, ‘partly because of the US blockade of Cuba but also because you cannot say what you want in Cuba. Cuban censorship is highly sophisticated.’

Reitov told the conference about a Cuban musician who was visited by a secret policeman who told him in a nice voice, ‘You’re a good guitar player – but it’s very difficult to play a guitar with a broken arm.’

Reitov believes that the US media attitude since 9/11 has become a matter for concern. Several musicians have been attacked by conservative media for their criticism of the Bush administration. The US music industry is further in the hands of fewer companies and corporate censorship/market censorship is seriously affecting the artistic freedom of expression and the diversity of media and market.

Freemuse receives core funding from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
&
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

