

## THE SMITHSONIAN GLOBAL SOUND PROJECT<sup>1</sup>

This initiative of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage<sup>2</sup>, launched in 2005, aims to make traditional music globally available via the Internet. The purposes of the project are “to make diverse cultural expressions broadly accessible to the public in an educational way and to nurture community-based music and musicians by making individual recordings available at a reasonable price”<sup>3</sup>.

The collections that the Smithsonian Global Sound (SGS) initiative holds include the entire Smithsonian Folkways collection and the holdings of two regional archives: the International Library of African Music (ILAM), in Grahamstown, South Africa, and the Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (ARCE), in New Delhi, India<sup>4</sup>.

An on-line user can search by means of criteria such as artist, geographic location, language, cultural group or instrument in a database composed of more than 35000 individual tracks of music, aural traditions, and natural sounds. The music is made available for downloading at 99 cents a track in MP3 format. Perhaps this is why the SGS initiative has been dubbed “the ethnographic answer to iTunes”<sup>5</sup>.

In order to use a recording, as opposed to just downloading it, a “Licensing Request Form” needs to be filled in. The condition, however, is that “licenses and permissions are granted on a case-by case basis and are at the discretion of the Smithsonian Institution. A license fee may be assessed depending on the nature of the proposed use”<sup>6</sup>.

Cooperative agreements have been established between SGS and the two regional archives named above in order to collate, centralize, and preserve collections of traditional music and oral traditions<sup>7</sup>. The collaboration also encompasses the exchange

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in the resource and practices referred to in this summary do not necessarily constitute the views of WIPO or any of its Member States.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.folklife.si.edu/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.folkways.si.edu/projects\\_initiatives/global\\_sound.html](http://www.folkways.si.edu/projects_initiatives/global_sound.html)

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/ourstory.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Article by Brian Braiker; *Newsweek*; June 10, 2005

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/licensing.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/musicpartners.aspx>

of high quality music against assistance to acquire computerized digital recording and processing equipment and technical training<sup>8</sup>.

The Smithsonian Institution expressly prohibits the copying of any material (text and image files, audio and video clips) on the SGS website, except for the purposes of “fair use” as defined by United States copyright law<sup>9</sup>. The SGS site notes: “Royalties go to artists and institutions, and honor the intellectual-property rights of composers, musicians, and producers”<sup>10</sup>. In other words, the revenue earned from sales of downloads and subscriptions supports the creation of new educational content and is shared with archival partners, who in turn pass on a portion of those revenues to artists and communities<sup>11</sup>.

The Director of the Project, Dr. Richard Kurin, has stated: “There are world music stars who mine the traditional music, and the question is, what is the ownership, what is the moral commitment and how much is going back? When we give them the money, that establishes the intellectual property rights”<sup>12</sup>.

For more information, see WIPO, “Towards IP Guidelines and Best Practices for Recording and Digitizing Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Survey of Codes, Conduct and Challenges in North America”<sup>13</sup>, by Martin Skrydstrup, 2006.

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/musicpartners.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Please see the site: <http://www.si.edu/copyright/>

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/ourstory.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/missionstatement.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Article by Jacqueline Trescott; *The Washington Post*; April 1, 2005; Page C01

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/culturalheritage/casestudies/skrydstrup\\_report.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/culturalheritage/casestudies/skrydstrup_report.pdf)