

Focusing on 'Tradition' and Ignoring 'Modern'? Ethiopian Groove (1950s- 1970s), efforts of Digitization and International Dissemination

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The musical development from 1955 until 1974 - that represented the crossroad between tradition and modernism is from today's point of view to be considered as the most progressive time marking the 'Golden Years' of musical innovation with very unique Ethiopian styled popular songs. Modern Ethiopian music reached its climax at the end of the 1960s when record companies started to release music. So it was a great step forward for the promotion of music both locally and internationally, when the first independent Ethiopian record label known as "Amha Records" was founded in 1969. In the years following, Philips and Kaifa record companies were established by two other Ethiopians. These three record companies altogether released more than 450 singles (45s) and 30 LPs from 1969-1978. This paper deals with the efforts made the French musician Francis Falceto who brought this unique collection of Ethiopian oldies to the world audience (starting from the 1990s) by releasing the so-called Ethiopiques CDs on Buda Music compiled in more than 24 volumes. Although, there are still a great number of record albums among others stored in the multi-media unit of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, other similar institutions as well as in private collection that urgently require our attention, the growing Ethiopiques series and the comprehensive documentation of Ethiopian Grooves reveals the most complete picture of both Ethiopian musicians and the music repertoire created during the highly productive years of the late 60s and early 70s. Falceto definitely deserves credit for his immense effort to make this unique collection accessible to the music loving world audience. The revival of this rare repertoire several decades after their initial recording through the Ethiopiques series is to be considered as a great break through for Ethiopia's modern music scene. In this way their long lasting preservation on new sound formats of the digital era has been guaranteed.