

A Source Plugged Into International Scene

WORLD MUSIC

By DON HECKMAN
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Want to know more about world music? There's no better source of information than RhythmMusic magazine, a slick monthly that manages to pack an amazing collection of features, data and insights into its 60 pages.

"People who understand the term 'world music' and buy it run into so much new material that they often don't know what to pick," says RhythmMusic's 27-year-old publisher, Alecia J. Cohen. "And then there are the people who think, 'World music sounds cool, what is it?' Our goal is to give all those people a chance to sample the music and learn about it every month."

When Cohen says "sample," she means it. RhythmMusic's current subscriptions cost \$50. But what the subscriber gets is the magazine as well as a monthly CD compilation of music from a variety of

world music artists. The April issue, for example, was delivered to subscribers with a CD that included tunes by Robbie Robertson, Henri Dikongue and Dadawa. The May compilation includes tracks by Chichi Peralta, Baka Beyond, Anam and David Arkenstone.

"When you got to a museum or read something like National Geographic," says Cohen, "it's like having a looking glass that allows you to look, but not touch. But I've tried to make the RhythmMusic magazine and disc combination more like urban anthropology, like actually discovering and experiencing the music almost firsthand."

In a broader sense, RhythmMusic reaches out to encompass what Cohen describes as a "world music lifestyle." Its lineup of regular features contains sections on world music business, upcoming festival events, discussions on the hip-hop, rock and dance aspects of world music, a percussion column and a listing of radio stations that play all genres of world music.

Cohen's "world music lifestyle" is further enhanced by food and travel columns tied to an individual

issue's thematic content.

"We want to combine the tastes, the lifestyles, the settings, the sounds and ideas of the changing world cultures," says Cohen.

RhythmMusic can be found in 6,000 outlets nationwide, including Barnes & Noble, Borders, Virgin Megastores, B. Dalton, Tower Records, Blockbuster and Books & Music. In May, via a special promotion, it will be available at all Borders checkout counters.

Label News: Rykodisc, founded in 1983 as the first CD-only label, is celebrating its 15th anniversary with a yearlong series of performances, retail events, radio promotions and Internet specials. Rykodisc's broad-based catalog includes several important world music sub-labels. The productions of Hannibal Records, acquired in 1991, range from the groups Outback and Baka Beyond to the superb Jesus Aleman-led Cubanismo band.

The World Series imprint releases albums produced by Mickey Hart (notably "Planet Drum") and the former Grateful Dead drummer's "Endangered Music Project." Ryko-

Latino, which debuted in January, issues music from Spanish-speaking artists, with new releases scheduled from Jimmy Bosch and Puerto Rico's Plena Libre. And the new Candescence label, designed to address "the parallel universe," specializes in world music hybrids from performers such as Soulfood, Lanterna and Burning Sky (a Native American ensemble).

Amiata Records is an Italian label with a large catalog that takes a strikingly diverse approach to ambient, New Age, contemporary and world music. The company's product is organized into six series.

Secret World concentrates on traditional global music, sometimes experimenting with unusual mixtures such as "Meeting of Angels," in which sitarist Ustad Nishat Khan performs with the Gregorian chant repertoire of the Ensemble Gilles Binchois. The Roots series focuses on contemporary world music, and New Music chronicles the work of composers such as Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Astor Piazzolla.

Inner Arts embraces relaxing New Age sounds. And Antiqua and Classica attempt to provide insightful reconstructions of previously unrecorded ancient musics.