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FORTY YEARS OF ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Along his career in the field of ethnomusicology, Steven Feld has been interested in sounds, human voice and senses, incorporating linguistics and poetics, music and aesthetics, acoustics and ecology, world music and local contexts in his reflections. From 1975 to 2000 he studied soundscapes, bird songs, language, poetry and music of the Bosavi rainforest inhabitants in Papua New Guinea. More recently, he engaged a multimedia project on the history and culture of bells, with research and recording in France, Finland, Norway, Greece, Italy, and Denmark. Since 2004 his research concerns jazz history in Accra, Ghana, focusing on the legacy of Ghanaba, the man who introduced talking drums to American jazz drummers in the 1950s.

Both prolific and awarded (he received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation award in 1991, was elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1994 and won the Fumio Koizumi Prize of ethnomusicology, for his life work in 2003), along the last thirty years, Feld has contributed with a rich written production specialized in media and art anthropologies. His book *Sound and Sentiment* (1982; 1990) was awarded the 1991 J.I. Staley Prize by the School of American Research; for *Music Grooves* (1994, with Charles Keil), he received

the 1995 Chicago Folklore Prize. His other books include *Senses of Place* (1996); *Bosavi-English-Tok Pisin Dictionary* (1998); and more recently *Jean Rouch: Ciné-Ethnography* (2003). His books and essays have been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, Greek, Russian, Turkish, Serbian, Chinese, and Japanese. Feld has lectured and performed at more than 150 universities around the world and also appeared on radio and TV programs in the US, Canada, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific.

Equally engaged as a documentary and sound artist, Feld's works include the album *Voices of the Rainforest* (1991); *Rainforest Soundwalks* (2001) and the triple CD/book *Bosavi: Rainforest Music from Papua New Guinea* (2001). Beyond the boundaries of Bosavi forest, his sound productions include *Bells and Winter Festivals of Greek Macedonia* (2002); *Romani Soundscapes e Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia* (2002); *Primo Maggio Anacrônico: Anarchist May Day in Carrara, Italy* (2002); *Santi, animali e suoni, A Soundscape of Winter Festivals Featuring Bells and Bagpipes in Southern Italy* (2005). In the African continent, Feld produced *Por Por: Honk Horn Music of Ghana for Smithsonian Folkways Recordings*, as a gift to Ghana for the 50th anniversary of independence in 2007. He also performed and toured with Accra Trane Station, and produced and recorded with them on *Tribute to A Love Supreme* (2005), *Meditations for John Coltrane* (2006), *Another Blue Trane* (2007) and *Topographies of the Dark* (2008). The latest album, *Bufo Variations* (2008) highlights the Ghanaian percussionist Nii Otoo Annan.

In 2003, he founded the VoxLox Documentary Sound Art, a record label committed to human rights and interested acoustic ecologies. Among their first titles are *A Time of War: Rahim Al Haj in New York* (2003), *The Time of Bells* (2004) and *Suikinkutsu: The Japanese Underground Water Chime* (2004).

In addition to his academic interest in sound, Feld worked for many years on documentary photography and cinema, directing the Documentary Laboratory of the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania. In recent years, he produced works for festivals, galleries, and museums in Africa, Europe and the USA.

Written in 1976 for the Society for Ethnomusicology Journal, the article *Ethnomusicology and Visual Communication* takes us back to a time when cameras powered by "portable battery weighing around eight kilograms" were novelties celebrated for their lightness and for allowing "filming noiselessly by twelve minutes



in perfect synchronization with a sound recorder “. In this article, Steven Feld examines a wide filmic production carried out by ethnomusicologists until then. Translated now for GIS, after almost forty years, his considerations still sound relevant for ethnomusicologists interested in making audiovisual production a serious methodology of expression and sharing of musical ethnographies.

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