This is my first foray into this discussion of collaboration between artists
and scholars of different countries, backgrounds, etc. Since I am not an
ethnomusicologist, only a composer who has been "associated" (mainly
connubially) with the field for some time, I am only humbling suggesting an
idea which seems to me useful. I am aware that those of you with a great deal
more practical experience in these areas will think it simplistic, but it is
a conceptual notion that has proved interesting and often enlightening for
me.

In artificial intelligence, there is a kind of informal paradigm called the
Turing Test. The idea is that behind a screen is a human, and an automata,
and you ask questions to both, and cannot distinguish the "intelligent
quality" of the answers, the automata is intelligent. It is, as I said, a
very informal, fuzzy, only partially useful and slightly anachronistic
notion, but it can often illuminate some real issues in a discussion quickly.
What I propose is a kind of "touring" test for ethnomusicology (sorry for the
pun, I didn't want to call it the Polansky, or Diamond test), which, when
applied, can sometimes help show some of the problems in a research or
collaborative situation.

Here's the (rather hastily formed) test: When discussing any research or
collaborative situation, substitute Blueland and Purpleland for Java, U.S,
Bali, Outer Slobovia, Haitian community, people who live in Cleveland and
wear funny hats, American League first-basemen hitting under .250, etc.
Remove all "cultural" (ughhh) baggage, the color of skin, the languages
spoken, the food they eat, etc. It's a kind of "Do unto others ..." game.

Then see if it sounds right to you. That is, without any assumptions as to
what you think "they" would like to have happen, do it to the purplelanders,
and see if they would like it just as much as the greenlanders.

Here's an example that came up for me recently, in a book review I was asked
to write for Ethnomusicology. I didn't put it in the review, because I,
frankly, haven't figured out a nice way to phrase all this, but it went, in
the case of the book, something like this.

"A composer from Blueland goes over to Purpleland, spends 8 or so years,
learning all he can from one of the greatest composers of Purpleland. He then
goes back to Blueland, writes a book on the music of Purpleland, which is
largely based on the music of the Purpleland composer. Since the Purpleland
folks have not yet written a book about their music (for whatever the
reason), the book eventually starts being used in Purpleland as well, as a
good teaching document for their own music. A major biography is written
about the Blueland composer, by a Blueland scholar who doesn't speak

Purple-ese, and almost no discussion is given of the music of the Purpleland great composer (the Blueland scholar doesn't know much about Purpleland music, even though that's what the subject of the biography mostly did). On top of all of this, there's still no biography of the Purpleland composer (teacher), but a major one of the Blueland composer (student). "

When it comes to royalties, academic credit (and the more important financial benefit of that) and so on, travelling from Blueland to Purpleland can sometimes help us see our own subtle biases. It doesn't really cure anything, but it does show, for instance, that racism is racism no matter which side it comes from (though sometimes it's a lot more understandable than at other times), and that we all need to be extremely conscious of the fact that we're always working with colleagues, not informants, natives, etc. (no one of us would particularly like being called an informant), and that every little thing we can do to erase the borders which cause inequity is important.

see you all in blueland

lp

 I no longer accept, and try not to use, the terms "race," "culture," (that's hard) "ethnic group," and other terms that seem to me to be no longer valid in any real way. They seem to mainly