

Artistic Integrity and Innovation vs. Selling Out (Part II)

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Herb Alpert recorded 28 albums and had five number one hits. He won eight Grammy Awards. He is the only artist to reach number one as both an instrumental and vocal artist. As part owner of A & M records, he was so successful financially that he became a notable philanthropist, and UCLA's School of Music is named after him. Many will find the video of *Tijuana Taxi* somewhat dated. Do you find this to be artistic, commercial, or both? By seeing and hearing this video and knowing it was hugely popular, do you believe the aesthetic of pop culture has evolved over time? Could something like this be popular today?

Next, we see a video of Genghis Barbie with a transcription of Sisco's *Thong Song*? Is this type of transcription as valid as those performed by Maurice André and Alison Balsom: the transcriptions of Marcello's concerto for oboe and Paganini's caprice both performed on trumpet? Should classically trained musicians perform this type of music? Are the members of the quartet "selling out"? Is a musician who refuses to conform to this type of entertainment too rigid?

Certainly, being able to work with other musicians or individuals in any field is an important aspect of achieving and maintaining a successful career. Read how two world-class musicians, acclaimed conductor Claudio Abbado and concert pianist Hélène Grimaud, disagreed upon which cadenza (a short unaccompanied section of the music) to perform. The disagreement put an end to years of collaboration and caused other problems for concert producers. Can an artistic conviction be a hindrance as much as an asset? When collaborating, how does an artist balance the ethics of maintaining their ideal aesthetic product with those of others? How do you work with someone who disagrees with you in these types of situations?

The Italian word *Diva* is used to imply a "celebrated female singer." Certainly, performing at a high level requires extensive preparation, and a person in a leading role and/or soloist is usually provided with certain perks such as their own dressing room. Divas or soloists are usually expected to serve as leaders and have significant input regarding artistic decisions. The term *Diva* has also been used to define individuals who expect particularly special treatment to the point of being difficult to work with. Read the story of Kiri Te Kanawa, who cancelled performances because of a need for artistic control. Where does one draw the line between the need to maintain an artistic standard and the necessary support for achieving this goal to just being difficult to work with? This story demonstrates that various individuals will have different expectations, and defining these in contract is important before beginning any business venture.