

NCRA Boycotts Polygram

by Ron Kuipers

Members of the National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA) are now officially boycotting records distributed by Polygram Canada. The NCRA has decided to take this drastic step because of a servicing fee Polygram is now levying against campus and commercial radio. As a member of the NCRA, CJSR, the University of Alberta campus/community radio station, has also decided to join this boycott.

The NCRA's move to boycott is dramatic because Polygram Records is arguably the largest record company extant today. Besides having the rights to high-profile artists such as Bon Jovi, they have and continue to acquire "alternative" record labels for distribution. Polygram has the rights to artists such as Michelle Shocked, Billy Bragg, De La Soul, and the Pixies. For the moment, these artists depend on campus radio for virtually all their airplay. They also own the rights to Love and Rockets, a band who first flourished on campus radio, and has since moved on to commercial success in the mainstream radio market.

Polygram's charge is \$325 dollars per year, which is meant to cover all services that Polygram offers to any radio station, campus or otherwise. This includes all recorded and promotional material sent to campus radio stations such as CJSR. This fee may indeed seem nominal, but if it becomes established it could be the start of a dangerous trend. Commercial stations in major market centres will not be hurt if this policy is established and replicates itself. Campus radio, however, with its limited budget, could be hurt. Polygram representative Dave Freeman is quick to point out, however, that this fee "doesn't even come close" to covering Polygram's cost for sending all this material.

All that makes no difference to the people

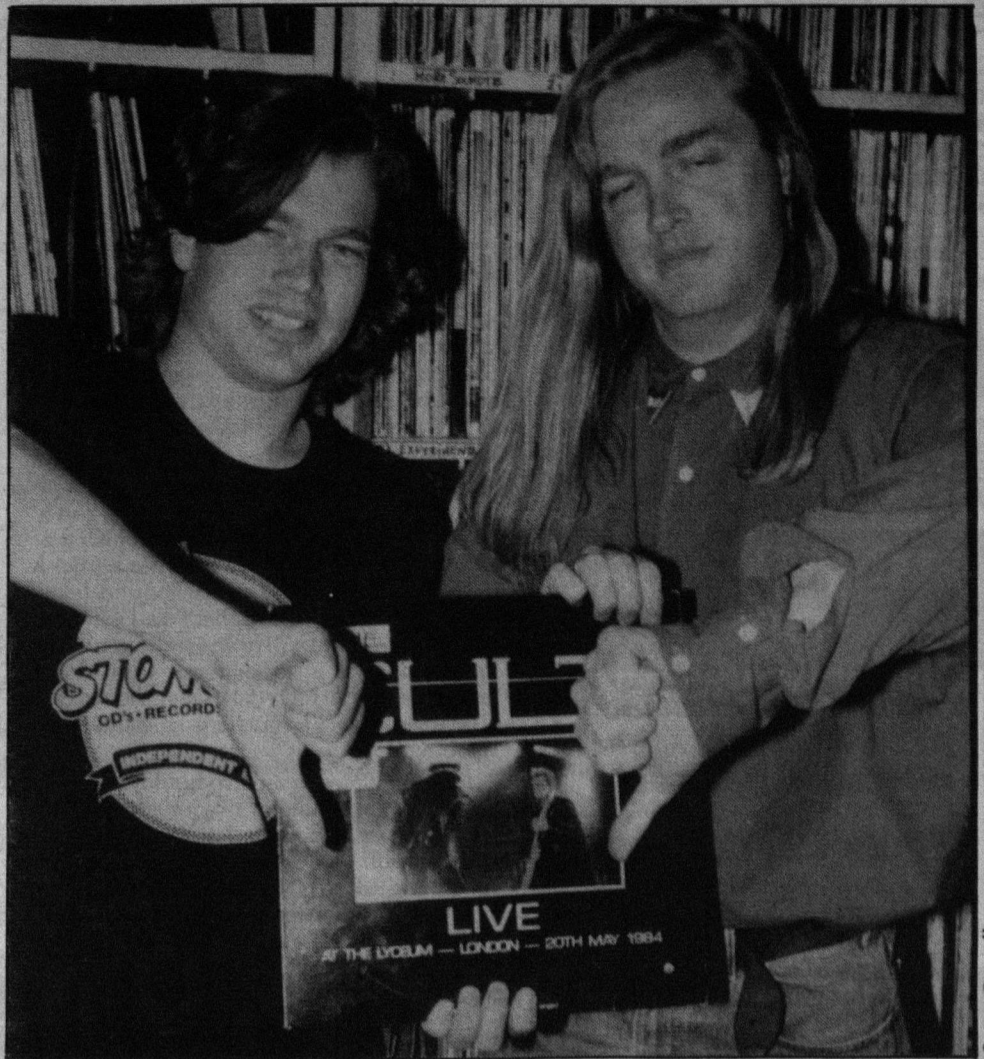
at CJSR. They feel that paying a fee to promote someone else's product is absurd. "We're boycotting Polygram solely for reasons of principle," explains station manager Ian Istvanffy, "we wouldn't pay it if it was five bucks." Music director Glenn Drexhage also adds, "Don't forget, we're providing a service for them. After all, we're playing and promoting their product on the air."

Freeman said that he finds the whole idea behind the boycott "somewhat presumptuous." "The Boycott presumes that campus radio should receive complimentary service," he says, "and that's just not the case." He also adds that the problem between the two factions is due to a lack of effective communication across the negotiating table, and that if the stations would speak with them on "an individual basis" much more would be accomplished. "The animosity is certainly not coming from our camp," he says, "In certain cases we have foregone the levy." He feels the whole boycott situation is due to a basic misunderstanding, and a result of "13, 15, or 17 people banding together."

Istvanffy, who said he is "not surprised" by Polygram's reaction to the boycott, points out that "every other major record label thinks we deserve complimentary service." As well, independent labels in a much worse financial position continue to send their product, free of charge, to stations like CJSR.

Istvanffy admits that this boycott will not affect Polygram Records for the short term. "They're still going to sell a million Bon Jovi records," he says, "but it's a cancer eating away at the core of their company." New artists that don't get commercial radio airplay and need campus radio will suffer as a consequence. Drexhage adds that "the next R.E.M. is not going to be on Polygram."

The issue turns on whether or not campus radio deserves complimentary service from



Glenn Drexhage, Music Director, and Ian Istvanffy, Station Manager, give the "thumbs down" to Polygram Records.

record companies. Though Polygram finds it hard to quantify, they doubt whether the total impact campus radio has on the market is relevant, and therefore feel that they do not deserve complimentary service. The NCRA, on the other hand, adamantly maintains that

they do. They contend that the promotional coverage and airplay they offer artists, especially those receiving little or no commercial airplay, more than compensates for the cost of promotional and recorded material that record companies send them.

Promising Future In Store For Child Prodigy



Juliette Kang looks to have a bright future in concert music.

interview by James Ingram

Imagine, just for a minute, that you're thirteen again. It's been a slow week — your grade eight class has only set one fire and sent two substitute teachers into early retirement with nervous breakdowns — and you're looking for something to do for the weekend. Hang out at the mall? The arcade? Go over to Jimmy's house while his parents are out and make yourself sick on his dad's sixty dollar scotch? Maybe fly in from Philadelphia to do the Tchaikovsky violin concerto with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra?

Probably not the latter. But then, you probably aren't Juliette Kang. Juliette has been playing the violin for nine years and is already on the verge of breaking into the upper strata of the world's concert musicians. And like Wayne Gretzky, Michael J. Fox, and Ermano Mauro, she started out in Edmonton.

Juliette started taking lessons with the Suzuki program for young children when she was four, "or just turning five, or something." She soon demonstrated she had perfect pitch and an astounding aptitude for music. Within a year her parents sent her to a private tutor, who, within a year sent her to another tutor until she ended up studying with E.S.O. concert master James Keene. He tried to teach her what he could, but eventually decided to refer her to the school he had graduated from, the acclaimed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

She auditioned on a half-sized violin and was accepted as their youngest violin student ever. She still attends Curtis and enjoys it tremendously: "It's very unique in that it's very small — it has about 180 students studying music. And they offer a full scholarship, which is different from most places. It's very comfortable and quiet."

In addition to taking university level music and history she finds time to take high school courses in math and biology at a nearby private school. "I juggle my time between going to Curtis and going to high school. I go to both in the morning — it takes until about two o'clock — and then I go back to Curtis for night school." The afternoons are reserved for three to four hours of practicing. All this effort is not without reward. She's due to get

both her high school diploma and her Bachelor of Music in another two years.

Her astounding musicianship has brought her other rewards as well. She has won competitions across North America, including four consecutive firsts in the Canadian National Music Competition. In addition, her touring, both as a soloist and with the Curtis Orchestra, has taken her to England, Belgium, and France. A personal high point, though, was the prestigious Beijing International Youth Violin Festival. "I received fifth place, which I was very happy about."

Her unusual capacity for work may be in part due to the fact that she likes a wide spectrum of music, from popular — "when I have time I just turn on the radio" — to classical. She refuses to pick favorite composers, however. "I like a lot of things. I try not to have certain favorites because then when I'm not playing one of those pieces the things I'm working on would suffer. I try to like what I'm playing at the moment."

At this particular moment she's working on the Tchaikovsky concerto for the E.S.O.'s Sunday performance. The concerto is one of the most demanding items in the violin repertoire. It was originally deemed unplayable by the violinist who had commissioned the piece, but since has become a concert hall favorite due to its accessible melodies and test of virtuosity for the top players.

Although this is the first time she has played the concerto with a full orchestra, Juliette is quite confident about the piece. "I've played it off and on for about two years. It's very difficult, of course, with all the octaves and double stops." A greater concern, however, is its length. "It's very long, longer than most violin concertos, being about 35 or 40 minutes. It's tiring."

Juliette declines to speculate about her future. "I have several years of schooling left, so I don't really plan on anything." She has always enjoyed playing solo, however, and her achievement so far indicates that she is headed for a brilliant concert career.

(Juliette Kang will be performing at the Maclab Théâtre Sept. 17 at 2:00 p.m. For more information phone 428-1414.)