

EDITORIAL

Soundcheck will pay its dues

A look at CHSR's alternative paper

For those of you who haven't noticed, CHSR has now moved into the publishing business. *Soundcheck* has now had three editions issued and it has shown regular growth since the first issue sometime in the beginning of the term. I must admit that I felt a certain degree of apprehension about the introduction of another newspaper on campus. After much soul searching it occurred to me that my anxiety was based on an unreasonable fear that *Soundcheck* would render the *Brunswickan* irrelevant by its dynamism and freshness. Well, I have repented of such paranoia. There is a more reasonable and positive way to look at this development. *Soundcheck* is an entertainment paper that Fredericton needs. Apart from the television oriented supplement that appears in the *Gleaner*, there is very little else (apart from the *Brunswickan's* Entertainment section) in town that serves as a forum for dialogue on the arts scene in the city.

In other city centres this kind of paper is a norm. As a result, some of these centres appear to have a more interesting range of entertainment possibilities than we do in Fredericton. They seem to be populated by people who listen to music other than top forty and country, and they seem less bothered by the threat of being labeled over-intellectual or "artsy" in their critical reviews of films, concerts and plays. For those visiting such cities these papers serve as excellent entertainment guides while providing often thought provoking articles about the role of art within a given society. More often than not, such papers are associated with the alternative realm of the arts largely because the mainstream material is amply handled by the larger media houses. Ideologically, the editorial direction of such "progressive" papers veers towards liberal humanism with a strong attitude on freedom of artistic expression and democratic values in the working environment.

No doubt, the above description is a massive generalization which borders on stereotyping but it is based on a look at such papers in Montreal, Halifax, and Toronto. Fredericton could use one. The idea for starting up such a paper is not entirely novel. About six months ago one of Fredericton's more talented musicians did some investigation into the possibility of getting such a paper going. He gave up when it became apparent that cost would be beyond his means. He has since left the country to make music elsewhere. His vision for the paper was very much in keeping with the prototype described above and with, it seems, the model that CHSR has followed.

The first few issues of the paper have introduced us to musicians like The Circle of Good Health (an alternative unit), through interesting and free flowing type interviews. Reviews of virtually all the bands that have played on campus in the past few months have appeared. On the most part the reviews have been painfully positive and less intent on exploring the content of the music played than in stating and restating the fact that this has been a good "band" term, for UNB. Political posturing has been a big part of the paper as well. The front covers attempt to draw interest with collages that deal with political issues eg. Saddam Hussein and AIDS. Articles about the environment, AIDS, and safe sex have appeared. The writing is characterized by a free-wheeling, hip cadence with a bravado that thrives on the shock quality that it produces. At times this writing style becomes irresponsible and disturbing and forces the reader to seriously question whether the paper has a clearly defined editorial policy on certain statements that are made.

It is these things that are of deep concern to me. In an article reviewing the Stomping Connors show at the Aitken Centre, Steph McCarthy seemed to take great exception to what he regarded as the singer's unprofessionalism. The negative bent of the review was McCarthy's prerogative: if he hated the show, he hated the show; but he went over the line of media etiquette when he described Connors as a "f--king drunk!" Newspapers have been sued successfully for less than that; and anyway, McCarthy did not in anyway support the accusation. In fact, in response to a letter of rebuttal printed in the next issue of the paper he declares that his point was "missed" and anyway, "it doesn't really mean that much to him." As editors of a progressive paper, *Soundcheck's* editorial unit should be far more responsible than that. It should mean something to him.

My second beef was with the article on safe sex practices. In it, the writer attempted a frank and humorous approach to stating the facts about safe sex. The piece rested on unsophisticated irony and a premise that people have to lighten up and face the facts. Sadly, this progressive attitude was marred by the introduction of misleading stereotypes. He/she describes people who "shoot-up" as individuals with yellow teeth who haven't taken a bath since they left home, and whose eyes look like huge plates. This generalization merely reinforces the myths that the article itself is trying to refute; namely that only certain types of people carry out acts that lead to AIDS. Quite simply, a drug addict is not necessarily a "filthy bum," and sleeping with a drug addict may be a very pleasant experience.

CHSR is taking a brave step in putting out this paper. One hopes that it will thrive and that it does not become the responsibility of one person to make it happen. The design and layout is in need of some tidying up, but that will come with time, and with people like Kay Brookland and Gordon Loane (two excellent workers who have had a remarkable influence on the *Brunswickan* in the past and now) working at the station, CHSR should have no trouble getting the training they need to improve the quality of the paper. The freedom to publish material has its price and the price is responsibility. *Soundcheck* should bare this in mind as it attempts to introduce a welcome alternative to the *Aquinian* and the *Brunswickan*.

On another note, I have been asked by the Editorial Board of the *Brunswickan* to state unequivocally that the *Brunswickan* Editorial Board will not be bought out by the beer and other such gifts offered to us by either the Social Club or the Student Union. The complimentary Social Club memberships are given to us every year and we welcome them. We also accept the annual honorarium from the Student Union. These, are however not to be seen as bribes. We remain committed to a balanced dialogue on the issues involved.

by Kwame Dawes

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The University of New Brunswick

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By Lynne Wanyeki

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