

Canadian Entertainment at a Glance

1025 words

10 March 2005

15:05

Resource News International

English

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Winnipeg, MB, Mar 10, 2005 (Resource News International via COMTEX) --

A MATTER OF PURE IDOLATRY

Winnipeg - Call it pre-fab Idol worship. The country's most famous karaoke contest winner, Canadian Idol Kalan Porter, visited the Burton Cummings Theatre last night, driving a crowd of 1,600 pre-teen and teenage girls absolutely delirious.

They screamed when he picked up his violin bow, went crazy between songs when he waved and looked at them with his puppy-dog eyes and went hoarse for some of the easiest guitar solos ever played in the history of the theatre.

Porter could have sang the alphabet, and this crowd would have lost it.

In such a confined space the effect of the young vocal cords produced a noise akin to a swarm of hornets and produced a painful buzzing in the eardrums.

Porter must have been wearing earplugs, because the curly haired, blue-eyed pretty boy just kept urging them on.

Silhouetted by purple lights, the 19-year-old Medicine Hat, Alta., native took the stage about 8:30 p.m. for a short violin solo before his out-of-place, slightly scuzzy four-piece band joined him on stage for She's So Dangerous, thrilling the fans with the "You're So Dangerous" sign.

But there's nothing at all dangerous about Porter, a fashionable, clean-cut sort whose voice is much deeper than one would expect for such a skinny kid.

Porter did his best to prove he's got some substance and not just another pretty face by playing the violin at various points throughout the night during songs like Single and the cover of Peter Gabriel's In Your Eyes.

The show was a mixture of songs from his double platinum album, 219 Days, and covers, including Neil Young's Old Man, David Bowie's Let's Dance and Cheap Trick's Surrender.

Original songs like the ballad I Don't Wanna Miss You and mid-tempo rocker After All were indicative of his set: radio-friendly pop fodder that is as easy to digest as it is to forget.

This stuff goes in and out of your system like fast food, but with less mess.

At press time an hour into the show, Porter was belting out his multi-platinum selling single Awake In a Dream (to many more screams, of course).

Brandon native Amanda Stott started the evening with a half-hour set of upbeat piano ditties and personal ballads from her new album, Chasing the Sky, which showcased her booming, expressive voice. (Winnipeg Sun)

INTERNET FEES MAY END DOWNLOADING

Montreal - An academic at McGill University has a plan to stop the plague of unauthorized music downloads on the Internet. And Apple Computers is listening. Music-industry veteran Sandy Pearlman, a former producer of the Clash and now a visiting scholar at McGill, spoke with a kind of nervous glee while describing his idea at the Canadian Music Week conference in Toronto recently.

Pearlman proposes putting all recorded music on a robust search engine - Google would be an ideal choice, but even iTunes might work - and charging an insignificant fee of, say, five cents a song.

In addition, a 1% sales tax would be placed on Internet services and new computers - two industries that many argue have profited enormously from rampant file-sharing, but haven't had to compensate artists.

The assumption is that if songs cost only five cents, people would download exponentially more music.

Daniel Levitin, a McGill professor also associated with the project, said a simple computer program, such as those already in use on Internet retail sites, could track people's purchases and help them dig through what would become a massive repository of music on the web.

The extra windfall for musicians and those who own the publishing rights to the songs could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, said Pearlman, based on his study's calculations.

It may sound like a pie-in-the-sky idea, academically elegant but impractical. Or is it?

The head of the British recording industry, who also spoke at the conference, made much the same point: music companies need to get used to the idea of selling more music to more people more often, but for less money - a notion repeated often during the conference.

Users of file-sharing services made roughly 25 billion unauthorized downloads last year, dwarfing the legitimate music industry, and it's getting worse.

Pearlman said nothing concrete is in the works with Apple beyond talks, and he has not yet spoken with Google. Still, Apple is listening, and this is the company that has already changed the industry by creating, many analysts say, the best working model for online downloading services.

Pearlman argued that his plan isn't a revolt against the industry. It's merely a pricing decision. Apple should be charging five cents instead of 99 cents a song, he said. This would bring in millions upon millions of customers. (Calgary Sun)

TRAIL DATE SET FOR RUSH GUITARIST LIFESON

Naples, Fla. - A trial date has been set for the lead guitarist of the Canadian rock group Rush, who faces assault charges stemming from an altercation with deputies in his Florida hotel room.

Alex Zivojinovich, better known by his stage name Alex Lifeson, is accused of pushing a female deputy down a hotel stairwell and spitting his blood on a male officer on New Year's 2004. He is scheduled to stand trial May 16, the Naples Daily News newspaper reported.

"I think it's (the case) going to trial," said Jerry Berry, Zivojinovich's defence lawyer, as he left the Collier County courthouse Wednesday morning.

The trial could be avoided if the state and defence reach a plea agreement in the meantime.

A judge can accept a plea agreement during an April 27 hearing.

Berry and prosecutor Rich Montecalvo would not comment on whether plea discussions are under way.

Zivojinovich was arrested for scuffling with Collier County sheriff's deputies at the Ritz-Carlton Naples at a New Year's Eve party a year ago. (Associated Press)

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