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This is what happens when pop meets policy

Popular McGill professor delivers much-anticipated keynote address

Leona Tiexiera

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Pop Montreal dimmed the lights last weekend and set the stage for the informative and opinionated symposium of the Schulich School of Music and The McGill Centre for Intellectual Property Policy, Pop and Policy. Instead of attending traditional academic lectures or studying for imminent midterms, many young musicians and music fans were welcomed into Pollack Hall by a giant screen displaying Will Ferrell in a painfully tight brown shirt, exposing his less than pleasant midriff and brandishing the ever coveted cow bell. While the Saturday Night Live skit played on a loop, two more screens and two guitars-one traditionally electric and one of the "Hero" variety-occupied the rest of the stage. Though one might not expect such a set-up for a presentation by Columbia University's Rick Karr or McGill's own Daniel Levitin, it proved the point that music can no longer be defined by traditional means. Having surpassed the stereotypes of passive enjoyment, music has entered the world of technology and reached through cyberspace to enrich many aspects of

everyday life.

Pop and Policy, which started as a single musician-centric lecture about indie music, has now swelled to become a complete set of conferences. Though this is the event's first full scale appearance in Montreal, its themes and concepts were reminiscent of last year's Future of Music Coalition Policy Summit. Although the FMC conference chose to return to its Washington, DC roots this year, the issues and spirit it brought to light have been kept alive here in Montreal.

Though a name like Pop and Policy might bring to mind images of obsolete government officials preaching about the lack of conformity in current musical trends, Levitin's Thursday night kenote speech, "This is your Brain on Music: Science and Technology from Synapse to Sibelius," illustrated that this was not the case. Like so many other mega-successes, Levitin began his journey by dropping out of university in his freshman year. Although he did not start a multibillion-dollar software company or an autumn fruit honouring computer giant like two other notable college dropouts, he did live the dream of many young musicians and day-dreamers: he joined a rock band. After much musical experimentation and band-.0hopping, Levitin finally settled down and finished his first degree.

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