

# An era of musical success, BC (before CanCon)

## Figures show Canadians did better on U.S. charts without CRTC rules

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TORONTO — When more than 600 representatives of the recording and broadcasting industries gather today to kick off the three-day Record Music Industry Conference, they will have some intriguing statistics to kick around — a breakdown of Canadian recording artists and their success in the United States.

The numbers, compiled by Martin Melhuish, managing editor of *The Record* — the music-industry trade weekly that is organizing the conference — seem to indicate that Canadian musicians enjoyed their greatest success south of the border before the Canadian-content regulations were put into effect by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in 1971, requiring that 30 per cent of all music broadcast in Canada be Canadian.

“With the recent debate over the worth of the CanCon regulations for radio,” Melhuish writes, “it is interesting to peruse [this] information to get a perspective on what effect, if any, they had on the international success of Canadian artists.”

Attending the Record conference (s Bruce Allen, the outspoken man-

ager of rock superstar Bryan Adams, who sparked controversy recently by denouncing CanCon regulations after the CRTC ruled that his record *Everything I Do (I Do for You)* did not qualify as Canadian content. Adams said the regulations had never helped him, and that they protect “mediocre” Canadian artists. Allen will appear this morning on a panel — mischievously titled *Everything We Do (We Do for You?)* — to discuss the relationship between the radio and music industries.

Melhuish's numbers, to be published in *The Record* this weekend, are derived from two books by U.S. music historian Joel Whitburn: *Top Pop Singles 1955-1990* and *The Billboard Book of Top 40 Albums*. These books list every record that reached Billboard magazine's pop singles and album charts from Jan. 1, 1955, to Dec. 29, 1990, with each record's debut date, peak position and weeks on the chart.

Whitburn devised a point system to measure a recording artist's “staying power,” based on the highest point reached by the recording on Billboard's Hot 100 singles chart or its Top 40 album chart, and the total number of weeks it stayed there.

“In browsing through the Whitburn tome,” Melhuish writes, “I became curious about how Canadians had fared over the years . . . [which] led to the compilation of a list of Canadian artists in order of the points (or ‘power points,’ as I call them here) they had accrued.”

Contacted this week, Melhuish agreed that the statistics were not directly relevant to the CanCon debate. “I want to stress that these numbers are strictly international,” he said. “They have nothing to do with the domestic industry. But I think it's rather interesting to see, when they are finally ranked, which artists did make it internationally.”

The top five Canadian artists (or groups) in the singles category over the 35-year period are, in order: Paul Anka, Anne Murray, The Guess Who, The Four Lads and The Diamonds. No. 6 is Bryan Adams, and filling out the top 20 are: Jack Scott, Loverboy, Steppenwolf, Gordon Lightfoot, The Crew Cuts, Corey Hart, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Andy Kim, Gino Vannelli, Neil Young, **Joni Mitchell**, Cheech & Chong, Percy Faith and Dan Hill.

The 10 Canadians with the most “power points” on the U.S. album

charts are Neil Young, **Joni Mitchell**, Rush, Steppenwolf, Percy Faith, The Band, Robert Goulet, Gordon Lightfoot, BTO, and Cheech & Chong.

Melhuish found that of the 4,550 artists who made it onto the Billboard singles chart in the 1955-1990 period, 139 — or 3.1 per cent — were Canadian. Of the 1,209 artists who made it onto the Top 40 album charts, 42 (3.5 per cent) were Canadian.

“I think my biggest surprise was how few Canadians had made it onto the charts,” he said.

Melhuish also broke out the top Canadian singles and albums on the Billboard charts between 1955 and 1990, based on their “power points.” The top five singles, in order, are: *The Theme from A Summer Place*, by Percy Faith (1960); *When I'm with You*, by Sheriff (1983 and 1988); *Little Darlin'*, by The Diamonds (1957); *Lonely Boy*, by Paul Anka (1959); and *Seasons in the Sun*, by Terry Jacks (1974). The top five albums are: *Reckless*, by Bryan Adams (1984); *Court and Spark*, **Joni Mitchell** (1974); *Harvest*, Neil Young (1972); *Sundown*, Gordon Lightfoot (1974); and *Not Fragile*, Bachman-Turner Overdrive (1974).