

Making Music: Profiles from a Century of Canadian Music. By Alex Barris and Ted Barris. First ed.; Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001. 498 p., ill. ISBN 0-00-200056-3. \$39.95

Over the last century, Canada has had its share of musical superstars. Yet, despite the success of homegrown musicians like Bryan Adams or expatriate performers such as Ronnie Hawkins, there is still a stigma attached to Canadian music that obscures and diminishes the accomplishments of these and other artists by refusing to accept them on their own terms. Canadian music is often "othered" against the yardstick established by American productions and, even though millions of albums are sold each year by Canadian artists, international success is equated with "selling out" or the abandonment of a Canadian identity. But hypocritically, when an artist does become popular south of the border, like the Barenaked Ladies for example, it is viewed as the Americans "catching on" to something Canadians already know. Notwithstanding this ambivalence toward Canadian performers, there is still a rich and interesting history of Canadian music.

Father-and-son authors Alex and Ted Barris have attempted to document Canadian music history. Journalists and part-time CBC announcers, the duo has chronicled a century of Canadian musicians in one book, *Making Music: Profiles from a Century of Canadian Music*. Tackling a century's worth of music is a daunting task, and the Barrises try their best to provide as much information about as many artists and genres as possible. The book ranges from classical and dance-band musicians

to folk, country and rock artists. Nothing more than an encyclopedia, *Making Music* purports to be "anecdotal and insightful" (inside cover leaf), providing a wealth of information that any fan of Canadian music would find useful. Unfortunately, the Barrises fall short of their intended goal. While many artists are represented, the attempt to be an all-encompassing volume about Canadian popular music constrains the information provided.

The entries, while containing some useful information, are largely vacuous and provide nothing more than a representing of facts available from any number of other sources. Along with black-and-white photographs that are of average quality, there is a regional aspect to the book that is unnecessary. Jazz musicians like Archie Alleyne and conductor Howard Cable are included over R. Murray Schafer or Randy Bachman. Granted, Bachman is mentioned in the Guess Who entry, but only in a paragraph mentioning the success of his other group, Bachman-Turner Overdrive. Schafer, on the other hand, is missing entirely. Also, some artists are included in group entries that would be better served as individual ones. The entry for UHF includes information about the folk trio and mentions the past accomplishments of its members Shari Ulrich, Bill Henderson, and Roy Forbes. Arguably, Henderson's achievements with Chilliwack and Ulrich's tenure with the

Hometown Band merit more than just a few sentences that attempt to distill their careers into an addendum to the present.

The book claims to be “profiles from a century of Canadian music” but, problematically, French artists are limited to those that made some impact on English Canada—albeit in the view of the authors. Robert Charlebois, Céline Dion, and Gino Vannelli are included but Pagliaro, René Simard, and Cano are not. The danger here of course is that Canadian music is perceived as being largely English Canadian, while the Québécois music scene becomes non-existent or at the very least relegated to a footnote in English Canadian music history. Unfortunately, Canadian popular music history is often imagined in that way.

To supplement the entries the authors offer ancillary information. In addition to a comprehensive index, a section is included featuring artists’ birthdays that are, curiously, not listed in

alphabetical order. This section becomes redundant because the main entries all have birth and death facts; more useful would be a select discography and a bibliography, both of which are missing. As well, the journalistic style of the authors contributes to the lightness of information and the questionable manner in which the book is arranged, although the Barrises do manage to include some musicians who would otherwise be neglected or forgotten.

The authors should be applauded for attempting to negotiate such a large topic as Canadian music history. But given the wide range of genres, it would have served a better purpose to have a multi-volume set rather than this single “quick and dirty” edition. In spite of the attempt to make the book accessible and readable for the die-hard music fan, anyone looking for substantive information will find it lacking.

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