

Music in Range: The Culture of Canadian Campus Radio. By Brian Fauteux. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015. 222 pages. ISBN 978-1-77112-150-7.

In Canada, campus radio stations and local, alternative music scenes have always been dependent on each other, with volunteerism and a sense of experimentation vital to their subsistence. In *Music in Range*, Brian Fauteux sets out to present us with a compelling picture of this phenomenon through a judicious blend of ethnography, history, and references to the literature of cultural studies. The regulatory framework of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has ensured that there is a place for broadcasting that is limited to geographic territory, non-commercialism, and community support and outreach. Campus radio stations operate under the mandate of serving community interests, by providing a “high percentage of Canadian content, the broadcasting of local information, and the promotion of local culture, arts, and music, as well as by supporting emerging local talent and local/regional content pertaining to social and community issues” (8). How all of this plays itself out forms the central thread running through this book.

A substantial portion of the book focuses on three stations—CHMA in Sackville, CKUW in Winnipeg, and CITR in Vancouver—and draws on quotes from interviews conducted by Fauteux with the individuals responsible for running these stations. Each locale is distinctive enough in terms of what is best described as socio-geographic attributes. Each has also played a decisive role in supporting the independent or alternative music scenes with airtime supplemented through involvement with local venues and festivals, publications, and in the case of Vancouver, an independent record company that grew out of the interests of two staff members. The terms “independent” and “alternative” have come to be primarily associated with music scenes, but as Fauteux notes, these terms have their own histories, and the vestiges of those histories have coalesced as they have become “integral terms and concepts for social movements and formations tied to community radio broadcasting, and they are manifest in systems that seek to increase diversity, access, and participation, in media and communication” (35). Regardless, it is in the promotion of independent and alternative music scenes that the campus radio stations have made their mark.

Fauteux’s aim is to bring together “cultural history, critical policy studies, and popular music and sound studies” (12), and there is ample evidence of these approaches, with numerous references to CRTC decisions and public notices and the incorporation of the ideas of people like Theodor Adorno, Benedict Anderson, Jacques Attali, Pierre Bourdieu, and Raymond Williams. For popular music studies, he enlists the likes of Simon Frith, Holly Kruse, Will Straw, and Sarah Thornton, and fittingly, it is Thornton’s idea of “subcultural capital,” an adaptation of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital,” that gets



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to the crux of the relationship between campus radio stations and their local music scenes. Campus radio stations play a strong role in the documentation of a local music scene, such that these scenes “depend not only on musical and cultural output but also on the institutional spaces where individuals can converse, discover new music, and learn how to produce media” (130). And it is important to note that these subcultural gatekeepers position themselves in opposition to the mainstream.

Fauteux’s outline of the history of campus radio in Canada, beginning in the late 1920s, and variously shaped by CRTC policies during the 1970s, culminates with two key events in 2010 highlighted and discussed in detail: a revision of the policy governing campus and community radio stations that incorporates funding models that promote Canadian content, and the revoking of Ryerson’s CKLN license for non-compliance with the CRTC’s regulations. He sees the revocation and the subsequent awarding of the frequency to a commercial station, Indie88, which was billed as “Toronto’s first Indie station,” as an indication that the CRTC may be moving towards a more commercially oriented broadcasting landscape, although admittedly it was the infighting at CKLN had rendered the organization so dysfunctional that even the most fundamental requirements by the CRTC could not be met. In its final death throes the station was broadcasting an audio loop of jazz programming, hardly an act of community involvement. (One peculiar omission in Fauteux’s account of the history of campus radio stations is the story of CJRT, which began as an educational station for Ryerson in 1949 and subsequently evolved into JAZZ.FM91, amidst considerable controversy over advertising and program content, although it may well be that precedent-setting stations such as CFRC at Queen’s (1924) or CKUA at the University of Alberta (1927) were more significant historically.)

What about the future of campus radio? With satellite radio and internet “bitcasting” the geographic constraints imposed by the CRTC in issuing licenses based on assigned broadcasting power are immaterial. Whereas York University’s CHRY has had to make do with 50 watts, effectively limiting its broadcast range to its Keele Street campus, the University of Toronto’s CIUT has been allowed 15,000 watts, so that it can be heard as far as Buffalo. But these allocations have become increasingly less important in a world where music is promoted and consumed through social networks scattered throughout the web. Fauteux, however, believes there is still a role for campus radio since music and musical taste that is supported and shaped locally are becoming more important “as the flow of digital formats reshapes the music industries and the emergent cultural processes of quickly and easily sharing music challenges the dominant industry model that has thrived alongside mass-produced music” (192). It could well be something similar to the resurgence of vinyl, where independent and alternative-minded individuals seek connections to the physical world through objects that can be held and places that can be visited.

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