



wake up! it's yer record breaking...

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MUSICAL SHARES

“The music business is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free and good men (sic) die like dogs for no good reason... there’s also a negative side.”

- Hunter S. Thompson

Spare a thought this week for the poor old music industry, which seems to have spent most of its publicity budget this year on advertising the fact that it cannot sell records. Not only that, but apparently it's the punter who's at fault for downloading stuff off the net for free and the artists who are milking the record companies dry. Yeah, right. Andy Taylor, head of Sanctuary, the only substantial independent record label left in the UK, disagrees: "Sales of recorded music account for a third of the whole market, which also includes tours and merchandise as well as the use of music in commercials and films."

He goes on to quote statistics to show that global income from music increased by almost 10% in 2001. Taylor argues that the music industry's problems stem from the corporate takeover that took place in the 1990s, when numerous small but healthy independent labels were swallowed up by major label budgets, squashing any long-term development of artists. "The easiest thing to do was produce short-term products that would give short-term growth," says Taylor. "It's become like the Christmas toy market."

In today's rhythmically globalised world, record production and sales are controlled almost entirely by five fat cat multinational companies intent on selling an easy-for-your-ears, empty-of-substance commodity. Why don't we take a quick run through the hit parade of corporations trying to monopolise our 'entertainment': There's AOL Time Warner (who own Atlantic, Elektra, Sire, Maverick among others); Vivendi Universal (MCA, Polygram, Geffen, Interscope, Motown); Sony (CBS, Epic); Bertelsmann (BMG, Arista, RCA), and EMI (Capitol, Chrysalis, Virgin, Parlophone). It's the new monsters of rock.

Vivendi Universal are about to merge with US TV network NBC, who happen to be owned by General Electric - manufacturers of engines for war planes used to bomb Afghanistan and Iraq, and donors of \$1.1 million to our much-loved Republican Party. Vivendi Universal also has links to Espelsa who develop mission planning systems for arms manufacturers Lockheed Martin and British Aerospace. And the latest is that their music division isn't doing so well, so they might soon be flogging it off to another corporation.

Keeping it in the corporate family, AOL Time Warner are currently negotiating with EMI to sell off Warner Music (Madonna, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Missy Elliot). And of course, AOL is involved in the arms industry through Hughes Electronic Corps and bombmakers, Raytheon Industries. AOL and Time Warner, who together have donated \$1.6 million to the Bush administration, merged in 2000 to form the fourth largest company in the world, generating more income than the output of Russia or the Netherlands. Meanwhile, Sony is in joint venture with the US Army to develop advanced training simulations equipment, and The Power Corporation of Canada, a major shareholder in BMG, is involved in the production of parts for fighter aircraft and other military vehicles. So the arms business is the new rock'n'roll then.

Dollar Notes

In the corporate boardrooms music is another commodity and the artists that create it are no more than a tool that they can use to tap into difficult markets. Record contracts are so watertight and royalties so low that it is only the really big stars - and the record execs - who ever earn a penny from record sales, so that's why the average musician isn't that worried about piracy. The man behind such musical greats as Steps, Pete Waterman (who once bought 18 Ferraris in one day) said: "As Mark Twain said, 'Feed a starving dog and it won't bite you.' That's the principal difference between an artist and a dog."

Music only becomes valuable when it can be used to sell other products. Mainstream success story David Gray says: "It's staggering the amount of money you're offered, but music is more important than selling mashed potatoes or a dodgy jacket made in the Philippines." He chose to say no. Last year Chumbawumba were offered, and turned down, \$350,000 by General Electric to use their hit 'Tubthumping' in an advert for air conditioning. They explained "It's not hard to dig up info on companies and sometimes it just stares you in the face. When we were in New York in January there was a huge

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For having a protest sign.

Canadian coppers harassing homeless activists and their supporters who were camped under a bridge to fight new anti-homeless laws nicked one person who had put up a sign about the protest. The cops said the protest sign was in fact a business sign which are illegal. They nicked the woman after she refused to hand it over and instead sat on it!

NO SWEAT banner hanging from a building in Times Square. In great big bold letters it urged shoppers not to buy Gap because they use sweatshop labour. Are Madonna and Missy Elliot dancing to Gap's tune because they have no idea what conditions the jeans they are flogging are made under? It's doubtful either of them would end up behind a counter or pulling pints if they didn't make the advertising revenue."

Other British acts, unable to get on radio playlists and so denied performance royalties as a source of income, are desperate to break into a hostile US market, and are less conscientious. Badly Drawn Boy linked up with badly made clothing company Gap, with his music featured on one of their ads, while Coldplay (who told the world to "make trade fair") sold off 'Yellow' to be used by ABC television. John Harlow, a partner in the advertising agency Naked explains: "The commercial brand world used to be quite a dirty word. Artists in the old days would say, 'I don't want to be involved with that.' But the dynamics have changed. Records sales are right down. There is a new era of collaboration."

Likewise, when once a band could turn up at a gig and insist the promoter take down the banner advertising a dodgy beer company before they would go on stage, now they are booked to play at the Carling Weekend in Reading and Leeds, or at the Carling Academy in Liverpool, or the Carling Apollo in Hammersmith. In the UK Carling, owned by US brewer Coors (investors in GM barley; right wing anti-union, anti-gay lobbyists...), are collaborating with corporate promoters Mean Fiddler and Clear Channel to sponsor venues and festivals to make the music industry profitable for them and turn festivals into soulless landscapes and extensions of a shopping trip. Pop has finally eaten itself and now it's in the toilet with its fingers down its throat.

* For more on Clear Channel: www.clearchannelsucks.org and www.rancid-news.co.uk

* For more on why the Mean Fiddler suck check out www.squall.co.uk

* For more on the melodious links between the music and the arms industry see: www.cstrecords.com/html/uxo.html

Rebel Alliance

New in town? Want to find out how to get involved in Brighton's direct action groups? Then get along to the REBEL ALLIANCE next Tuesday (14) 7pm at the Cowley Club, London Road. Also showing will be American anti-war film 'We interrupt this Empire.'

HEATH-ROW!

As SchNEWS went to press four people from Hounslow Against New Terminals were still occupying a crane on the building site of Heathrow's Terminal 5 where they've been direct action dangling since Monday morning.

Heathrow airport just keeps on growing – despite the construction of Terminal 5 underway, the airport authority are now saying they want a sixth terminal and a third runway! On a local level that would mean up to 10,000 homes plus schools, churches and community centres flattened, wiping out the villages of Harmondsworth and Sipson while Longford and Harlington would become so heavily polluted they'd become uninhabitable. 230 hectares of green belt would also be lost and nearby Hounslow already one of the most polluted places in England would become an even worse place to live. One of the protesters said "We are occupying this crane indefinitely because if the BAA (British Aviation Authority) gets its way, our community will pay with the loss of our homes, schools and health. We are sick of corporate greed bulldozing the needs of our population."

The aviation industry wields a big stick and is using the government's own forecasts of air travel nearly tripling in the next 25 years to justify huge and immediate expansion across the country. And it expects to get its way. Chris Mullin, a former Labour junior transport minister commented "During my 18 months as a minister whose responsibilities included aviation, I learned two things. First, that the demands of the aviation industry are insatiable. Second, that successive governments have usually given way to them. Although nowadays the industry pays lip service to the notion of sustainability, its demands are essentially unchanged. It wants more of everything."

Aviation is the fastest growing source of carbon emissions in the country thanks to our love affair with ridiculously cheap prices. Cheap that is for the consumer, thanks to fuel and tax subsidies thought to be worth up to £500 per person a year, but not cheap for a choking planet.

See: www.hacan.org.uk

* Don't forget Rising Tide Gathering at the London School of Economics this Saturday (11) 'Oil, war and climate change: dismantling the oil economy.' Book your place 01865 241 097 www.risingtide.org.uk

Tragic Mushroom

People from around the world converged last week on a camp in central Australia held by local senior Aboriginal women - the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta – to talk and enjoy a cultural exchange. The main topic for discussion was the way the atomic age has been such good news for the area. Never-heard stories from local Aboriginals emerged about the British Government's atomic bomb testing in the area which began in October 1953. There were accounts of the earth shaking, dense radioactive clouds, the sickness and death caused by the testing - which has never been compensated for – as well as defiance and spirited survival. And it doesn't end there: these same lands are now the target for a proposed huge nuclear waste dump, as well as being near the biggest uranium mine in the world, Roxby Downs. There will be actions and events around Australia on October 15th to mark the 50th anniversary of the bomb testing. See <http://melbourne.indymedia.org>.

For more about the camp and the fight against the nuclear dumps www.iratiwanti.org

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SchNEWS in brief

Radio 4A is back on the airwaves in Brighton this weekend (101.4FM) and on the net at www.radio4a.org.uk ** SchWOOPS – wrong website in last weeks article about the protest camp in **Sherwood Forest**. should read http://mysite.freemove.com/sherwood_camp/ - the camp has now been served its eviction notice and desperately needs more support ** 200 000 protesters were faced by 9 000 coppers as they flooded the streets of **Rome** from the 5th-6th to protest the meeting of 25 EU heads of state deciding on a superstate-creating EU constitution, www.indymedia.org ** **Arab-American activist Ramzi Kysia** - who spent nearly two years in Iraq before, during and after the war - will be in the UK between 15-24 November and is looking for people to organize public meetings. 020 7837 0561 gabriel@voices.netuxo.co.uk ** **George Bush is coming to the UK** late November and people are already planning to give him the bushwhacking welcome he deserves. To find out about the protests resistbush@yahoo.com ** **DOVE – opposing the polluting incinerators in East Sussex** will be walking along the River Ouse on the 21st October before ending up at the White Hart Hotel, Lewes where the public enquiry into incinerators is being held. Walk starts Paradise Park, Newhaven 9am 01273 515967 www.dove2000.org

Put-in Power

In war-deadened Chechnya last weekend's elections gave Chechens little to lift their spirits. Akhmad Kadyrov, Russia's preferred puppet, was elected president with over 80% of the vote in Kremlin-rigged elections. His two main opponents were forced out of the running. While Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that the turnout had been 86% and that it represented "a positive change" most independent sources saw the election as a farce with a much smaller turnout. A mere 50 people voted out of the thousands of Chechen refugees crammed in squalid border camps.

This farce is all part of Putin's naked attempt to bring the rebellious little separatist state back into the loving arms of Mother Russia. It's his homegrown version of 'the war on terror', having bombarded the capital Grozny into heaps of rubble and having run a campaign based on abduction and pistol-whipping. Through the elections Putin is trying to force-feed the international community the idea that Chechnya is returning to a state of normalcy and stability. And so all those thousands of pesky refugees camped on the border who are a blatant example of terrifying instability are being forced from their camps and encouraged to return to the normalcy of Chechen life. Russian troops recently broke into the Bela refugee camp near the Chechen border, cutting all energy and water supplies, pistol-whipping and abducting their way to forcing the 1200 refugees back into Chechnya in time for the elections. The UN has whimpered and expressed 'concern' about the human rights violations but with the US desperate for Russian support in its own war of terror there is little chance that any action will be taken against Moscow.

So will the pink flowers of democracy blossom now that elections have taken place? Fat chance. A blossoming civil war is what Chechens are most probably gonna be plunged into. FSB (the former KGB) agents say they are now preparing for a bloody civil war pitting Kadyrov's personal army of 4,000 against the leaders of rival factions who've been sidelined by the Kremlin. Add to that Kadyrov's faltering relations with Moscow after having declared that he doesn't want to 'rush' into parliamentary elections and you've got yourself many more years of blood spilling and freedom choking.

Positive Vibes

The music industry still has its highlights, with small, independent records labels and festivals running and jumping all over the place. Truck Festival appeared in 1998 when a family decided that mainstream festivals were crap – so they organised their own. They got a friendly farmer on side, enlisted a dodgy rave geezer to do the dance stage and built a stage from 2 trucks.

5 years on and the festival's still small, run by volunteers (ice cream sold by the local vicar), cheap (tickets, food and beer) and fun. Oh, the music's good too – everything from country to UK hip-hop and even a cheeky trance party if yer lucky! Plus it's made tens o' thousands of pounds for charity.

Like their website says – "There is no cut throat capitalism here, no huge entry fees, and no inappropriate huge advertising boards...it's a nice day out in the countryside with a few beers and a plethora of bands." www.truckrecords.com

* American singer Ani DiFranco has set a shining example of what can be done by avoiding recording companies, and makes 10 times the profit by producing and selling her own records through her own website. To date she has sold around a million albums. British singer/songwriters Charlotte Greig and Astrid Williamson are following suit. Greig says: "Labels are much less important than they used to be, because CDs are now so cheap to make. The punk do-it-yourself dream is finally coming true."

Inside SchNEWS

While starve-myself-so-I-can-be-a-fat-cat David Blaine gets £5 million and lots of free eggs 'n' kebabs for hanging in a box, two of the seven prisoners on remand after the massive protests at the EU summit in Greece (see SchNEWS 413) have gone on hunger strike. Simon Chapman this week joined Suleiman "Kastro" Dakdouk in the Syrian's third week of a hunger strike while supporters in London hung a banner on Tower Bridge opposite Blaine to highlight the plight of the imprisoned protesters who've been framed by the Greek cops. thessalonikiprisoners@yahoo.com or www.indymedia.org.uk

* The Legal, Defence and Monitoring Group are holding a workshop next Saturday (18) where a solicitor will go through the law and answer questions for anyone arrested for 'Obstruction of the Highway' at the recent DESi arms fair protests. It's free but to get a place email ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk

...and finally...

Sitting in our Armani suits, tapping on £10,000 laptops on the 15th floor of SchNEWS Towers we often think about how profitable it would be if we increased our around 40,000 weekly readership. So why not help us realise the SchNEWS dream by getting it sent to your email box every Friday morning in a PDF format – which means it looks just like the original copy. You can then double your friend database by photocopying and distributing it at gigs, pubs, shops, cafes, school, university...leave copies in buses, trains, doctor's surgeries, old age homes... To find out how easy it is see: www.schnews.org.uk/pages_menu/subscribe.htm

We're also looking for more venues that would like to get a regular piece of the SchNEWS action - let us know of any suggestions so we can send them a few copies each week. Local cop shops need not apply.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers making a song and dance of it - just for the record, take note, you're instrumental in the scale of things. Honest!