

The Island Yankee

By Suzanne Williams

I have been going through my compact disc collection, and I have been noticing that most of my music is foreign. As in Canadian.

I knew that many of these people were Canadian from the start, but after finding out about other groups and soloists I know of, it seems that about 75-80% of my popular music CDs feature Canadian artists, such as Sarah McLachlan, Bryan Adams, and Ashley MacIsaac.

Actually, for the longest time, I thought Ashley MacIsaac was a female. I figured he was the singer, because that's how things work in the States. When Madonna first came out, the name on the album wasn't Jellybean, who was one of the producers. Rather, it said "Madonna" right there, in black and white.

I can't tell the difference between American and Canadian artists anymore. If I'm listening to someone in the States, I figure that this person or group is American. If I listen to someone who I know is American in Canada, they're still American, but when someone I have never heard of is played on the radio up here, my mind says, "Canadian. Definitely." But are they?

It seems like you have to buy the album in order to figure out where these groups are from, because the fashion is the same, the voices are practically the same, and the ideas behind the songs are the same. The lyrics, the themes, and even the names are the same. It's only the names that change.

It really irks me to hear someone do a remake of a song I listened to when I was a kid. The remake usually bites the big one. That remake of "Every Breath I Take," for example. I know some lyrics were changed, because I don't think Sting would ever mention religion in his songs. This is a love song. What does God have to do with it? Unless this is some spiritual rebirth thing. And the video really bites. When I first listened to that song in the 80s, I didn't picture some guy falling off his motorcycle, getting up immediately, and rapping about some dead guy.

I do happen to like Nikki French's remake of "Total Eclipse of the Heart," though, because all Bonnie Tyler ever did was whine and bitch throughout the song, which only lengthened the torture. I don't know how that song ever got to be a big hit. But with the techno-crap and stuff, it's really great.

I understand when a group does a song at a concert by someone they admired and grew up with, but I don't think that the group should record the remake on their album, because the new performer did not write the song. It's stealing. Copyright means nothing to me. If a copyright of a song expires, people should still respect the song for what it was instead of recording it while adding more ornamentation to the ends of phrases to make the song "fresh."

Songs do not mean what they used to. The lyrics are there, but when the singer or wannabe-singer adds profanity or the word "baby" after every other word, nothing gets said except, "I don't know anything about music." So why not leave it to the experts, i.e. the people who really can sing? Songs don't have to have high notes in order to be special. They don't have to have someone swearing up a storm. They don't have to have nothing but ornamentation. Save that for Christmas. It's only four weeks away as it is.

Travel: Salzburg, Austria

By Kristen Patterson

Currency: The Austrian schilling is worth 0.11 Canadian dollars (one Canadian dollar is worth 8.71 Austrian schillings).

Enter the land where window shopping can both tantalize and depress. From miniature musical instruments to gorgeous linen blouses, not to mention strings of outdoor cafés, I had to fight to hold back the tears when discovering those nasty little numbers known as prices. This city believes in the power of money and has little mercy on shoestring travellers like myself. It is a fantastic place to explore, though, especially in the company of fellow hostellers. Just focus your attention away from the merchandise, to the scenery around you. They can't charge you anything for looking.

How to get to Salzburg: There's always the train. I found the station a little confusing (getting there at night did not help) but not impossible to navigate my way through. Just head for the front of the building and look outside. There should be rows of tram lanes waiting for you. As far as buses are concerned, I have sorted something out that should be of help. There are three different possibilities through Travelcuts. Eurobus will get you to Salzburg via their Northern Zone tours. Contiki and Top Deck are the two other companies, who do pass through Austria, though I'm not sure they stop in Salzburg. If they don't, I'd be very surprised. And of course, there are all the other modes of transportation available, as usual.

Where to stay: I stayed at the Jugendgästehaus at Eduard Heinrich Straße 2, 5020 Salzburg. The hostel was pretty good -- my dad and I were in a private room while at the hostel. This is an option at almost every hostel and is something of a life saver when you're despairing from sharing space with five to twenty other people each night. It costs a bit more but is very worth it if you don't feel up to socializing. The hostel is well-located, close to the city's centre.

How to get around Salzburg: Apart from walking, trams are the way to cover longer distances and they're relatively easy to figure out. Cycling is a possibility, although there are tons of pedestrians so it's hard to navigate your way through the city streets.

Where to go: This is it. Here is where cheesy comes into play big time. If you feel up to it, by all means, buy a ticket for the Salzburg Sightseeing Tour of *The Sound of Music*. Team up with American tourists from the hostel - it adds so much to the overall experience. If you're really lucky, you'll get an American tour guide named Brendan who, fortunately for you, played the captain in his high school's production of the musical, and who will be more than happy to reprise his role, live, for your listening pleasure. And, if you're feeling a little dangerous, tell Brendan that you're Canadian, and he'll tack on "eh" to the end of every sentence he utters. I can say in all honesty that the Sound of Music tour changed my life completely. A-ha. Not much. However, it's one way to get out into the Alps and listening to Mr. Intercom-Happy's lectures on communism and Naziism is worth the view. Say hi to Brendan for me. Other sightseeing possibilities are:

Mozartplatz and Mozarts Geburtshaus: this is, of course, the birthplace of Mozart and if you're interested, stop by the statue and his home.

Festung HohenSalzburg: you can't miss this castle, as it's high on a hill, overlooking the entire city.

Dom: this is a beautiful cathedral, located near Mozartplatz.

Getreidegasse: where hearts are broken and spirits crushed. In other words, the shopping district.

Mirabellgarten: one of the prettiest gardens anywhere and the last stop on the Sound of Music tour (the famous "Do, a Deer" sequence was shot here). Feel free to re-enact the entire number, including all choreography, at no extra charge.

Next issue: Chamonix, France. Happy Holidays!