

Above and beyond — The role of private radio



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One look at this year's Juno Award nominees is like taking a snapshot of one of Canada's national air-play charts. The similarities are astounding. While Juno Award nominees are selected through a combination of sales and voting by members, those nominated also reflect what's playing on Canadian private radio.

It is clear that private radio plays a major role in music's success, not only by driving CD sales but also by supporting artists in the early stages of their careers. Private radio broadcasters are key in promoting and developing those artists who show promise and great talent. It's what radio does day in, day out.

The success story of Standard Radio's HTZ-FM (CHTZ-FM, St. Catherines) *Rocksearch* is a prime example. This music competition, designed to help new local talent get started in the music industry, has been a landmark in Southern Ontario

for 17 years. Local performers battle it out on stage in front of a music industry judging panel.

This commitment to developing talent extends to every niche of the radio music business by initiating programs like the National Songwriting competition, the Free Spot Plan, Vibefest and CHOM's (Montreal) *L'Esprit* launched in 1978, just to name a few. Local programs like these encourage and support local talent and build the radio stars of tomorrow.

Reinvestment in Canadian talent is also seen on a larger scale with radio broadcasters contributing to FACTOR and MUSICACTION as well as funding the Radio Starmaker Fund and its French-language equivalent, le Fonds Radiostar. Government and industry partnerships like FACTOR have been successful in supporting a wide array of Canadian music. FACTOR has provided over \$71 million to the music industry since its inception, most of which goes to Canadian independent productions.

The Radio Starmaker Fund, created by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and funded by private radio broadcasters, provides a substantial incremental investment in Canadian artists that have established a proven track record. Radio Starmaker has committed over \$6.2 million to Canadian artists to date.

These direct investments work. Accolades and industry leaders' praise, Juno, Grammy or ADISQ nominations, as well as high number of spins and radio requests for artists' songs, attest to the success of the initiative.

Sadly, talent is often not enough to make it big in the Canadian music industry. Private radio has recognized this constraint and has been tireless in promoting and supporting the very best of our home-grown talent. NewCap Broadcasting has shown its leadership in emerging talent development by airing *Action Atlantic*, an eight-time East Coast Music Award nominated program showcasing emerging talent in New Brunswick and across

Atlantic Canada weekly on C103 (CJMO-FM) Moncton. This program is devoted to airing interviews with bands or music of artists not usually heard on mainstream radio. Examples of programs like these can be multiplied hundreds of times in regions across the country.

The Canadian Radio Music Awards honours artists in the early stages of their careers. Now in its seventh year, the 2004 edition of the Canadian Radio Music Awards was televised for the first time providing exposure for thousands of Canadians to the new crop of radio stars being honoured. Private radio heavily promotes the nominated artists to the tune of over \$400 thousand of donated PSA air time each year.

Early recognition of talent was also behind the initiative that saw private radio broadcasters co-sponsor with FACTOR the New Artist of the Year and New Group of the Year Juno Awards.

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters has also endeavoured to promote talent by inducting an artist in its Broadcast Hall of Fame in a special Music Star Category each year. Most recently, international star Ginette Reno received this award at the CAB 2003 Annual Convention in Québec City.

At a time when it seems that people are deserting Canadian artists by resorting to downloading instead of buying, private radio continues to do what it does best—play and promote Canadian artists and support them through initiatives that go above and beyond. It's a role and an incredible public service often overlooked, but crucial to fulfilling many of the government's cultural objectives.

By supporting Canadian talent, private radio ensures the long life of its product and, more importantly, contributes meaningfully to the expression of Canadian culture. Current Canadian content requirements alone can't fulfill their cultural objectives. The push that radio gives to music artists and the drive that will propel them to stardom is key.