

L'industrie du disque au Québec

Introduction:

In 1998, the business journal **Les Affaires** claimed that Quebec was the only place on earth where the production of musical recordings was not dominated by giant, multinational companies (Noel, 1998: 3). Like an earlier myth, suggesting that records themselves (in their flat, modern form) had been invented in Montreal, this was both an exaggeration and a useful reminder of Quebec's unique status within the history of the music industries. The Quebec case is rich in lessons for those who seek to analyse the place of domestic music industries within the global circulation of cultural forms and commodities. As one of the most cosmopolitan and open of musical markets, Quebec has, at the same time, been extraordinarily successful at developing its own, locally-based music industries. Likewise, while the music of Quebec is often discussed in terms which valorize continuity and, in particular, the traditions of the *chanson*, Quebec has been a key site for the production and reception of modern, technologically-mediated forms, such as disco and electroacoustic music.

Although it is common to speak of the "music industry," there are, in fact, several industries in which music plays a central role. In the first quarter of the twentieth-century, the sale of "sheet music," which offered the lyrics and musical scores to popular songs, was the most popular and commercially significant means of marketing music. While sheet music continues to be sold, in specialized stores (such as the Archambault chain, which began as a vendor of sheet music), musical recordings long ago replaced the *partition* as the most important commodity

form for music. Music is also a major form of programming for the radio and television broadcasting industries, with whom the recording industry has had an often uneasy relationship. Finally, as one part of the audio-visual synthesis common to a variety of leisure forms, music is present in films, live spectacles (such as the performances of the Cirque du soleil), and even sports (where, as at hockey games, it is often used to shape audience reaction.)

Music is central, as well, to the nightclub and other leisure industries, for whom it provides a principal attraction to potential customers. The smallest of nightclubs is linked to the global music industries through the musical programming which it offers, and through its participation in what scholars of leisure call the cultural practices of the “24-hour city.” The nightclubs and festivals for which Montreal has long been famous (or notorious) over the last century are part of the hospitality and tourist industries, but they are, as well, part of the music industries in a broader sense of the term. The consumption of popular music has served to transform the social and moral geographies of our cities, turning declining industrial buildings and neighbourhoods into sites of dancing and subcultural congregation. Music is one element in those long-term processes through which, throughout Western cities, the day-time economy of industrial production has given way to the night-time cultural economy of alcohol consumption and social interaction.

Research on the music industries of Québec is made difficult by the variety of these industries, and by the fragility and small scale of most enterprises operating within them. While public broadcasting institutions, such as Radio-Canada, have the resources and stability which

enable them to accumulate historical archives, record companies are often small, short-lived and understaffed. The television and radio industries, subject to heavy regulation, regularly produce large quantities of documentation and submit these for the public record. There are few such requirements for the recording or concert industries and, as firms go out of business or change their names, they leave few traces beyond the legal records of bankruptcy proceedings or law suits. For these reasons, it is much easier to trace the history of broadcasting in Quebec than to reconstruct that of recording companies or concert promotion. Only in the last ten years, with the significant growth of funding programs for the music industry, have we seen the release of rigorous research reports on the record industry in Quebec (e.g., Ménard, 1998). The nightclub or concert industries, even more fragile, pose still greater obstacles to those seeking to write their histories.

While we may think of government policy towards the music industries as relatively recent, music has long been the focus of a complex set of regulatory and subventionary structures. For over a century, its commerce has been the subject of international agreements on intellectual property, such as those which governed the publishing of sheet music. Canadian tariff regulation, throughout much of the twentieth century, encouraged multinational record companies to establish subsidiaries in Canada rather than simply import manufactured recordings from elsewhere. Music is the object of federal policies which regulate its use as programming on radio, federal and provincial subsidies to support musical recording as a cultural industry, censorship laws which have, on occasion, been directed at music, and a range of laws and ordinances (involving everything from noise levels to drinking hours) directed at those leisure

industries in which music plays a significant role.

In the academic world, the music industries are something of an orphan, rarely studied within university departments of communication, and usually ignored within the discipline of music itself. While there are longstanding traditions of research on the *chanson* as a cultural form, and on music as a form of folklore (see the articles elsewhere in this volume), such work does not normally look at the commercial and industrial dimensions of popular music.

(Important exceptions include the work of Grenier (e.g., 1993).) The most detailed history of the modern Québécois recording industry has not been published in book form at all; rather, it exists as an internet site maintained by its authors (Tremblay, 1995). Scholarship on the music industries is often undertaken within subcultures of fans and collectors, such as those who publish fan magazines or catalogues devoted to Quebec pop and the *chanson québécoise*. The fanzine *Yé-Yé*, published in Quebec in the 1980s, remains among the most comprehensive sources of information on early 1960s Québécois pop. Likewise, the documentation accompanying archival recordings by such artists as Raymond Lévesque or the Million-Aires, on the small MusiSelect label, is as comprehensive as any academic scholarship on the subject.

Music as national culture

Music's place within the cultures of nations is not easily grasped. On the one hand, music seems one of the most deeply rooted of collective cultural practices. Its importance in folk ritual, military ceremony and festive interaction have led us to see music as a fundamental part of

national life, even when its present-day forms are overwhelmingly industrialized and professionalized. At the same time, music is a cultural form whose “content” (in a political or social sense) is notoriously difficult to isolate or judge. Québécois rock of the 1970s, for example, was full of reflections upon national identity which were often profoundly connected to broader social movements, and to a collective project of imagining new forms of national life. In contrast, the yé-yé pop of the early 1960s seemed blatantly imitative of Anglo-American models, based on the quick translation of English-language songs with no obvious socio-political content. For a long time, in histories and commentaries on these movements, the relative political importance of each seemed easy to judge. At worst, the yé-yé boom was seen as a symptom of Quebec’s cultural underdevelopment in the early days of the Quiet Revolution. At best, as Renée-Berthe Drapeau suggests, yé-yé was a necessary step in working out the terms of cohabitation between the French language and the rhythms of rock. In either case, the promises it offered seemed only to be fulfilled with the flowering of Québécois rock in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

We might remember, though, that the conspicuously nationalist singers of the 1970s recorded, much of the time, for multinational record companies, while their yé-yé predecessors were more likely to be signed to small, Quebec-based firms. More so than the Quebec rock of the 1970s, the yé-yé boom rested on hundreds of groups rehearsing and playing in cellars and community halls across Quebec, acting as intermediaries between an emergent Anglo-American rock and the local contexts in which that music was finding new audiences. While the Quebec rock of the 1970s produced a widely-acknowledged canon - a set of cultural monuments and

distinguished careers -- the yé-yé boom brought hundreds of people into all levels of the music industries, laying the foundations of Quebec's present-day music industry establishment.

Two models of a national music may be glimpsed here. In one, music works to nourish and transform collective, public discourse, renewing forms of language and tradition which have been stagnant or suppressed. This was true, quite obviously, of the music of Harmonium or Beau Dommage. If multinational record companies invested in such music, finding value in its integrity or authenticity, these links to international capital could be dismissed as incidental when set alongside the music's obvious rootedness in a local culture. In another model, music is primarily a token of social and economic exchange -- the pretext for small-scale commerce, dreams of show-business careers, fantasies of weekend leisure, and new connections between operators in a wide range of industries and institutions. Here, the most trivial and disposable of music might, nevertheless, create the thick webs of interconnection through which a national culture acquires solidity. What counted in yé-yé music, it might be argued, were the new forms and sites of social interaction which resulted, the networks and personal trajectories which drew new lines of movement and intersection across the map of a national culture.

Like most narratives of national cultural awakening, the history of recent Québécois popular music is often recounted as the struggle to find a distinctive voice. This story typically moves from the post-war cabarets of Montreal, incubators for the emerging "chanson," through the successive waves of politicization which mark the 1960s and 1970s. A key moment in this politicization was the adaptation of musical vocabularies derived from rock, itself an

international form, to the project of expressing local political themes. The assimilation of rock within the Quebec context involved the incorporation, within it, of folk and traditional elements inherited from the earlier, pre-rock history of Québécois popular music. In the 1970s, the narrative goes, major labels invested in Québécois music, then withdrew that investment towards the end of the decade. A slump in sales of Québécois music in the early 1980s coincided with (or was an effect of) post-referendary malaise. The industry's revival in the late 1980s was marked by new channels of promotion (such as MusiquePlus), more tightly integrated corporate structures, and an often confusing pluralism of styles and genres. By the end of the 1990s, a sense that the industry had reached a state of prosperous maturity was tempered by uncertainties over internet distribution, free trade, the concentration of music retailing and host of other, new challenges.

As a schematic tool for understanding the last three decades of Québécois popular music, this account is as useful as any alternative. Like many studies of national music industries, however, it pays insufficient attention to broader, international patterns. In Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Italy and dozens of other countries, the relationship between national traditions and larger industrial patterns followed similar lines of development. In all these countries, in the early 1960s, local bands mediated the arrival of the new rock sound, producing local versions in national languages or regional accents, recording cover versions for locally-based labels. (In each of these countries, in fact, one may now buy series of compilations of locally-based “yé-yé” bands of the period.) By the end of the 1960s, groups had ceased producing cover versions, preferring to write their own material and to participate in the development of national rock

“voices.” Through the early 1970s, in all these countries, the subsidiaries of major multinational record companies invested in emerging national rock traditions, drawn to their marks of authenticity as hooks with which to sell them, both at home and within an international marketplace. Indeed, the early 1970s sees the emergence of easily identifiable international market for innumerable “national” versions of rock, movements in which elements of tradition and pre-rock folk forms could be found. This musical moment withered in the late 1970s, under the impact of at least two developments. One of these was the music industry’s economic crisis, after 1978, which resulted in major multinationals reducing their investment in national musics outside the Anglo-American axis. The other development, arguably, was the emergence of punk and related forms, which fractured the rock audience and offered other, rejuvenatory models for a rock which claimed to be “progressive.” Indeed, from the perspective of punk culture, with its fetishism of the local, those performers whose principal political reference point was the national collective risked appearing pompous or grandiose.

If there are parallels in the development of indigenous rock traditions in Quebec, Mexico, Italy and Brazil, these should not serve to trivialize such traditions, nor to suggest that the political dimensions of Québécois rock in the 1970s were simply a by-product of the global music industries’ own strategies. These parallels, nevertheless, suggest how difficult it is to distinguish between moments in musical history marked by conformity to international trends and others which escape these trends. If a dozen countries assimilated the emerging sounds of Anglo-American rock through the prism of their own, national yé-yé booms, the local character of these explosions may be as significant as the Anglo-American origin which was their common

inspiration. Similarly, Harmonium might sit comfortably alongside Genesis or the Allman Brothers in comprehensive histories of 1970s rock, as one more example of the turn towards national traditions in an period preoccupied with the genuine and *enraciné*. Studies of the recording industry which focus on national struggles to protect local industries or nourish national forms of expression often overlook the broader patterns through which localism and cosmopolitanism rise and fall as widely-shared criteria of musical value.

A musical movement such as disco music, popular in the mid-to-late 1970s, challenges historical accounts of the Quebec music industries in revealing ways. Disco is sometimes posited as the movement which ended the golden age of Quebec rock, luring audiences and musicians alike away from the ongoing development of an indigenous popular musical tradition. For journalists of the time, such as Nathalie Petrowski, disco represented a “*démagogie dansante*,” a totalitarian distraction from the more obviously political project of indigenous popular musical forms (1979).. Later, Renée-Berthe Drapeau, while recognizing that many Québécois musicians involved themselves in the production of disco music, nevertheless saw this involvement as the return to an imitative relationship to music whose origins were elsewhere. In this, it was like the *ye-yé* of the previous decade (Drapeau, 1993). The sense that disco represented the invasion of foreign musical styles was common in music journalism of the late 1970s.

To the international music press, however, disco was a significant component of Montreal’s distinctiveness. The popularity of disco in Montreal was seen to perpetuate that city’s long history as a city of nightlife and musical entertainment, to prolong the sense of youthful

modernity which had presided over Expo '67, or to reinforce the city's stereotypical image as the "Paris of Montreal," a capital of leisure and semi-illicit entertainment. All these comparisons presumed a natural affinity between disco music and Montreal, and worked against the perception of disco as an alien, invasive force. Like yé-yé, however, disco gave substance to a national musical culture, less through the themes which found textual expression within it, than in the new sorts of institutional and economic relationships which took shape around it. Disco came to be deeply rooted in the micro-economies of small record companies, retail shops, nightclubs and distributors in Montreal. More so than many forms, it was the focus of a sociologically complex "scene," whose participants built effective links between a wide range of institutions and activities.

In 1979, **Billboard** magazine, the bible of the U.S. music industry, described Montreal as "the second most important disco market on the continent, outside New York." It held that status in part because of the high levels of sales for disco records in Quebec -- "we can sell 20,000 copies [of a disco record] without a radio station because of the active club scene in Montreal," one record company executive told *Billboard* (*Billboard*, 1977). It maintained that status through the development of an effective infrastructure for making and marketing disco records. In 1976, Montreal nightclub disc jockies formed one of the continent's first disco "pools" (associations which distributed promotional copies of disco records to nightclub djs). Before the success of *Saturday Night Fever*, Montreal television stations broadcast weekly disco-oriented programs (such as "Disco tourne"), and hosted annual disco awards shows. By the end of the 1970s, Montreal disc jockies had become important remixers of dance music for the international marketplace. Several locally-based record companies were established to produce and market

disco records of Montreal origin throughout the world. Québécois tastes were seen to favour disco records with a stronger base than was common in Europe, so those importing such records frequently remixed them to augment their lower frequencies.

In the ease with which those working within the disco industries moved between roles (from club disc jockey to radio host to record producer and record company executive), and in the high degree of interaction between musical subcultures and the mainstream worlds of commercial broadcasting or media celebrity, disco was more compatible with longstanding structures of the Quebec music industries than other, more credible and canonical musical forms. If the records themselves seem disposable, even trivial, the fabric of connections and careers which took shape around them was substantive. Between the suburban clerk's monthly attendance at Montreal nightclubs and the underground New York discotheques in which records from Montreal might be heard, a finely-layered set of economic and institutional relationships had taken shape.

The economics of the music industries:

For many years, those studying the cultural industries have grappled with the question of how such industries might differ from those which produce other sorts of goods. In particular, sociologists and economists have confronted the fact that the market for cultural goods is, typically, more turbulent and unpredictable than that for other classes of commodities.

Sociologists such as Paul Hirsch have noted that the producers of cultural goods rarely undertake

extensive pretesting of their products with potential consumers, as do the manufacturers of automobiles or breakfast cereals. Rather, new titles (of books, recordings, films, etc.) are released into their markets in the expectation that large numbers will fail. It is presumed that the success of a few titles will recover the costs of those which have failed. In few other industries would such high levels of failure be tolerated.

From this uncertainty, analysts argue, stem the distinctive organizational forms of the modern cultural industries. Rather than advertising their products extensively to potential buyers, for example, record companies place a high level of emphasis on the co-optation of so-called “media gatekeepers” -- on winning over critics, radio station programmers and other mediators of public taste. In this process of co-optation, as Hirsch suggests, cultural producers depend on “boundary-spanning personnel”, people actively engaged in interaction with the worlds of journalism and artistic creation which exist outside the organization. The value of such personnel will shift rapidly, with time, as new trends emerge or public tastes change, but this does not pose a threat to a company’s stability. Rather, people in these roles are isolated from the more stable parts of an organization (such as accounting or distribution). They are encouraged to dress casually, stay up late, and participate in the broader cultural “scene” outside the organization. The value of such personnel is dependent upon the range of contacts and intuitive skills they possess (qualities easily transferred from one organization to another) rather than on their gradual ascendancy within any one firm.

In addition, as French cultural economists have noted, firms in the cultural industries

usually seek to develop classes of product which are less susceptible to the uncertainties typical of the markets for new, hit-oriented product. For multinational majors, these have usually included classical recordings, which traditionally sell more slowly but more predictably than pop or rock. These sorts of product may also include forms mood music, which are often cheap to produce but less likely to go out of fashion quickly. As well, the development, over time, of a back catalogue -- of a "list" of older materials which sell steadily over many years -- will help cultural producers to survive the volatile swings of their markets, and provides them with the long-term assets on which stability depends (Huet, 1978)..

For record companies in smaller markets, or for those unaffiliated with multinational majors, achieving organizational stability is the major challenge to be confronted. While an emphasis on hit-oriented recordings is risky, investment in slow-selling classes of product (such as classical or jazz reissues) may be expensive in its initial stages and involve slow rates of return. In countries whose music industries have only recently become productive, there is often an absence of the kinds of back catalogue recordings which guarantee stable revenues, year after year, to Warner or Sony. As we shall see, the importance of back catalog recordings has risen sharply in Quebec in recent years.

Over the past quarter-century, the structure of the recording industry has developed in ways intended to further reduce risk, with important implications for the industry in Quebec and other small markets. Beginning in the late 1960s, in the United States, most so-called "major" record companies (such as Warner Music) shifted their emphasis from the production of records

to the building of national distribution systems. The records distributed through these systems came, increasingly, from smaller companies which these majors had bought (such as Reprise or Motown), or with whom they had entered into affiliation agreements. More and more, firms such as Sony or Warner Music acknowledge that the successful exploitation of rap or techno is best undertaken by buying up smaller companies who have already demonstrated success in these genres (and not by sending their own employees out to investigate such genres.). By 2000, most major record companies have come to depend on dozens (sometimes hundreds) of smaller, specialty labels to monitor distinct musical genres and discover new talent. These smaller labels, who may be dropped or closed when their areas of specialization go out of style, assume a significant part of the risk typical of a rapidly-evolving marketplace.

This structure has been replicated, since the early 1970s, in other national markets and in relation to other national musical traditions. Beginning in the 1970s, as they established national distribution organizations within Canada, multinational music firms began to affiliate themselves with Canadian-owned record companies, as a way of profiting from the success of Canadian artists and musical styles. As I have argued elsewhere, the most successful record companies in English-Canada, in the 1970s and 1980s, concentrated their resources on so-called talent-oriented activities (the signing of artists and production of master tapes) and depended on multinational majors to distribute their recordings across Canada (Straw, 1996). This two-tiered system, in which a handful of foreign-owned multinational firms distributed the music of a dozen or more English-Canadian companies, offered a long-lived, if uneasy working structure for the Canadian industry through the 1970s and 1980s. It allowed multinational firms to benefit from the success

of Canadian performers with minimal investment on their own part. This system also absolved small Canadian firms of the need to organize coast-to-coast distribution across a large geographical expanse.

Since the 1990s, however, this structure has begun to dissolve, for a variety of reasons which are beyond the scope of this article. In Quebec, the music industries have developed in very different ways, for at least three reasons. The first of these is geographical. While the distribution of music across Canada requires resources which few domestically-owned companies possess, distribution within the Quebec market has been carried out efficiently and profitably by firms based in Quebec. As Marc Ménard noted, in a report to the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles, the emergence of an tightly-integrated infrastructure for the distribution of musical recordings throughout Quebec constitutes one of the great achievements of the domestic industry over the last several years (Ménard, 1998: 7). In large measure, the effectiveness of this system is due to the resources of the Select and Musicor operations (both of which are owned by the Archambault group and, ultimately, controlled by the Québecor corporation), but smaller companies such as Distribution Fusion III, Cargo, Trend and others have been important distributors at various points over the last thirty years. While the multinational majors continue to distribute English-language recordings in Quebec -- and, increasingly, import recordings from outside Canada rather than pressing them here -- small Francophone labels have easy access to a domestically-owned distribution infrastructure.

As was the case in English-Canada, in the 1970s, access to distribution allows smaller

companies to focus on “creative” activities -- on finding and recording artists -- rather than on the physical transportation of goods. Transformations in the organization of musical labour have encouraged this tendency. When groups arrive with their own master tapes, produced in home studios or on desktop computers, one traditional role of record companies -- that of selecting material, organizing sessions and producing a final product -- seems less and less necessary. Indeed, as observers suggest, record companies may increasingly become “brokers” of a sort, linking performers and their material to existing structures of distribution and promotion.

As long as solo singers, working with professional songwriters and back-up musicians, remain important within Québécois musical culture, the traditional functions of record companies are likely to persist. In other styles and forms, however -- from hip-hop through alternative rock and techno -- a combination of artisanal production and professional distribution is becoming more and more common. In a report to the Société générale des entreprises culturelles du Québec, Marc Ménard suggested that a key factor determining the sales of Québécois music in Québec might be supply. Echoing comments by journalist Alain Brunet (1998), Ménard warned of a possible gap between public tastes, which were becoming increasingly diverse, and the continued homogeneity of popular music produced within Quebec. If the Québécois music industries were to successfully meet ascendant public demand for hip-hop, electronica, and a myriad of other forms, a reorganization of industry structure to effectively cater to that demand might be desirable.

A second, crucial difference between the Québec music industries and those of English

Canada concerns the role of media in the promotion and exposure of music. If, as suggested earlier, cultural firms assign high priority to “boundary-spanning” functions, English-Canadian record companies long suffered from the weakness of the environments in which this might be carried out. Before 1971, when Canadian Content regulations for music on radio were implemented, radio programmers showed little interest in English-Canadian popular music. There were few of the television variety programs or music-oriented magazines which record companies typically seek to influence, or through which performers might acquire the celebrity on which a successful career is founded. The absence of an effective infrastructure of entertainment-oriented media, regularly disseminating performances, information about performers, and a broader audio-visual context in which music might become meaningful, meant that English-Canadian music was released into an informational vacuum. This would change in the 1970s, with new regulations for radio, and again, in the 1980s, with the introduction of MuchMusic, all of which have provided new contexts within which English-Canadian popular music is heard. Nevertheless, the popular music of Quebec has long benefitted from its much stronger integration within the machinery of celebrity and public exposure. Television, as

In 1977, *Billboard* magazine described the media context for music in Montreal:

The problem of over-exposure is extreme. In Montreal alone, each week, some 18 newspapers, specialized magazines, about 20 hours of television variety on the two Francophone networks, and hours and hours of radio broadcasting gush forth like a media kaleidoscope (Peclet, 1977: C10).

This comment captures the well-known dilemma of Quebec's music industry. With its own star system, celebrity-oriented tabloid press and profusion of television variety programs, Quebec offers a rich variety of channels for the exposure and promotion of performers and stars. At the same time, as record companies have noted with persistent regularity since the 1960s, over-exposure of music on radio and television will often reduce the sales of records and concert tickets. The strength of a tightly-integrated media culture is that it may offer a range of means by which entertainers may make money and cross-promote their various activities. The risk is that radio airplay or television performances will replace, in the minds of the public, the musical recordings whose sales they are meant to stimulate.

One significant difference between the Quebec and U.S. recording industries, Marc Ménard has suggested, has to do with the typical patterns by which record companies expand into other activities. Multinational music companies have normally expanded through so-called "vertical" integration, taking over all stages in the process by which recordings are manufactured and distributed. To do so, of course, requires a high level of investment in infrastructure -- in warehouses, manufacturing plants and raw material suppliers. This investment, in turn, presumes high levels of production, and the amortization of costs over a large number of titles. Few Québécois music companies operate with sufficiently high volume to embark upon the building or acquisition of such infrastructures.

Quebec firms have placed greater emphasis on the "horizontal" integration of promotional and other activities, "allant de la gérance d'artistes à la production de spectacles, en

passant par l'édition et la production de vidéoclips, voire la production télévisuelle et les studios de son" (Ménard, 1998: 8). More generally, the various components of the music industries are more tightly integrated, in economic terms, in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada. The best example of this integration is the complex of firms associated with the record label Audiogram. Audiogram's ownership overlaps with that of the concert promotion and production company Spectra-scène, the Archambault record store chain, the recording facility Le Studio, the Montreal Festival du jazz, the *gala de l'ADISQ* (the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo) television program, and the record distribution companies Select and MusicCor. A similar pattern characterizes the various enterprises owned (in whole or in part) by Montreal-based entrepreneur Donald K. Tarlton. These include five record companies (Aquarius Records, Tacca Music, DKD Disques, DKD Vibe, DKD D-Noy), a concert promotion firm, DKD! Spectacle, and an artist management company, Generation. Here, again, there is little vertical integration; each of Tarlton's five record labels is distributed by a separate, external firm. (Like most Quebec labels specializing in Francophone pop and rock, Tacca is distributed by Trans-Canada Archambault.)

A third distinctive feature of the Quebec music industries is the role assigned to the music of the past. In the week of April 3, 2000, three of the five best-selling Francophone recordings in the Quebec market were compilations of past hits, by performers whose greatest successes had come twenty or thirty years earlier. (The best-selling album was Mireille Mathieu's *Mes plus grands succès - Volume 1*; numbers 4 and 5 were Morisod/Sweet People, *Les grands succès du bel âge*, and a compilation album *Génération Yéyés: Les années 60*.) While this might be

taken as a sign of the industry's stagnation -- its failure to produce successful new titles -- many embraced this public interest in the historical heritage of Québécois and Francophone musics as evidence of the maturity of a local industry. The Quebec industry's rush to find new value in its repertory of older materials stood as proof that the musical heritage of the recent past had been rehabilitated, reinvested with cultural and economic value (see, for a discussion of these issues, Cormier, 1998.)

Conclusion:

In 1999, **Le fou du disque**, a large, disorganized warehouse selling thousands of old vinyl records, closed its doors. It had existed for many years on rue Berri in Montreal, across the street from the bus terminal. Within its doors, customers could find the largest accumulation of Québécois recordings in Montreal. As desirable titles from the past were quickly bought up and removed, other classes of product remained, unsold, over many years: piano albums by Lucien Hétu, albums by Montreal studio orchestras covering hits by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, records by youth choirs from Gaspésie, and so on. Over time, the very bulk of these undesired albums assumed a monumentality of sorts. The dozens of copies of each title testified to the scale of an industry which had sought to cater to all levels of taste and audience over the half-century history of the vinyl album. Arguably, the success of a national cultural industry may be measured in the regularity with which it seeks (however cynically) to serve popular taste, not simply in its ability to produce a few subsidized works of distinction and high civic purpose. More so than any public institution, **Le fou du disque** served as an archive of national cultural

production -- just as effectively, perhaps, as the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec which will be built on its premises.

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2. Site web de l'ADISQ (Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo):

www.adisq.com

3. The Canadian Music Encyclopedia (Québecor/Canoe)

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4. Société de développement des entreprises culturelles; études sur l'industrie de disque et de la chanson:

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