

**Ключевые слова:** эмиграционное музыкознание, культуротворчество, традиционализм, «эпоха МУР-а», персонализм, Мирослав Антонович.

*Music and artistic trends within emigrational environment during the concentration camps age of the 40-s and the first after war decades of the previous century in the general context of the emigration classical view are analyzed. A review of musical publications in emigration allows ascertaining the problems of that age. It is discovered that traditionalism within the framework of a distinct domination of national and statist grand-narrative in a musical scope of emigration has become the aesthetic paradigm of music studies view development and the strategy of actions for the entire musical society. It is stated that in case of personalistic consideration, the study of music in emigration represents a more complex picture. On the basis of Myroslaw Antonowycz's epistolary genre, the problem of individual ways of reaching the European identity as the world-view transformations within the musicological emigration environment, in particular, of M. Antonowycz's one, is outlined.*

**Keywords:** ukrainian emigrational musicology, traditionalism, concentration camps age, personalism, Myroslaw Antonowycz.

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### FROM POLKA TO POWWOW: THE UKRAINIAN RECORDING INDUSTRY IN WINNIPEG

*In the summer of 2010, the Manitoba Museum, the provincial museum for the province of Manitoba, presented a special seasonal exhibit titled «Shakin' All Over: The Manitoba Music Experience.» The goal of the exhibit was to celebrate the province's rich and diverse musical heritage, and to acknowledge music makers of the past and present.*

**Key words:** recording industry, Ukrainian society, musical inheritance, musical producer, Canada.

#### Manitoba Music Experience

Shakin' All Over, was designed on a budget of approximately \$200,000 that came from private and public funds, and was sponsored by the Manitoba Music Experience Inc., a committee formed by civic leaders and arts supporters seeking to find a permanent facility to house a Manitoba Music Hall of Fame.<sup>1</sup> The exhibit was intended to give visitors a taste of what could be if the temporary exhibit generated enough excitement and support. According to the organizers, their long term goal was «a stand-alone facility that will house artifacts, activities and the music of the province's performers, composers and music industry under one roof; a meeting place to see and learn about our musical history, celebrate our many successes, and inspire further generations of music-makers»<sup>2</sup>.

The exhibit was primarily the brainchild of its main curator, Winnipeg music historian and writer John Einarson. In addition to reviews and articles in a number of popular music journals, Einarson has produced definitive biographies of musicians Neil Young<sup>3</sup>, Randy Bachman<sup>4</sup>, the Guess Who<sup>5</sup>, Steppenwolf<sup>6</sup>, the Buffalo Springfield<sup>7</sup>, and the Flying Burrito Brothers<sup>8</sup> among others. His most recent work is a biography of Canadian folk icons Ian and Sylvia<sup>9</sup>. Einarson's first forays into music journalism were somewhat autobiographical in nature: he had been a member of a member of

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/arts/manitoba-hits-manitoba-stars-manitoba-museum-97217074.html>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Manitoba Music Museum

<sup>3</sup> John Einarson. *Neil Young: Don't Be Denied* (Kingston, ON: Quarry Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> John Einarson and Randy Bachmann. *Randy Bachmann: Takin' Care of Business* (Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> John Einarson. *American Woman: The Story of the Guess Who* (Kingston, ON: Quarry Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> John Kay and John Einarson. *Magic Carpet Ride: The Autobiography of John Kay and Steppenwolf* (Kingston, ON: Quarry Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> John Einarson and Richie Furray. *For What It's Worth: The Story of the Buffalo Springfield* (Toronto: Cooper Square Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> John Einarson with Chris Hillman. *Hot Burritos: The Story of the Flying Burrito Brothers* (Minneapolis: Jawbone Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> John Einarson with Ian Tyson and Sylvia Tyson. *Four Strong Winds: Ian and Sylvia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2011).

bands that were active in the Winnipeg scene during the 1960s and 70s. As a result, he had direct connections to many of the early pioneers of Winnipeg rock music, including a number who would go on to international fame. He used these connections to help organize the first Winnipeg Rock Revival in 1987, which saw aforementioned stars like Neil Young, Randy Bachman and Burton Cummings return to perform with their lesser-known colleagues from their formative years. Those same connections helped him produce his first monograph, which was also entitled «Shakin' All Over: The Winnipeg Sixties Rock Scene<sup>1</sup>». That retrospective laid the groundwork for his further looks into various aspects of popular music history<sup>2</sup>, and his knowledge and advocacy lead to creation of the 2010 exhibit.

The exhibit was divided into a number of pods, each dedicated to a specific genre of music. Included were representations of First Nations and Metis, Franco-Manitoban, Folk, Family, Country, Classical and Opera, Jazz, Blues and Rock N' Roll. Each pod was made up of panels featuring photographs, posters and other visual material and display cases containing a variety of artifacts. In keeping with Einarson's area of expertise, and perhaps anticipating the genre that would generate the most interest among museum visitors, the Rock music pod was by far the largest. The exhibit also set aside an area that functioned as a performance space, with various genres of music featured throughout the exhibit's run.

Conspicuous in its absence was any mention of the musical traditions of the province's ethno-cultural communities, apart from those of the Francophone and Aboriginal communities. The pod devoted to folk music focused exclusively on commercial folk music with biographies of roots musicians like The Duhks and the Wailing Jennies and descriptions of folk music venues and the work of organizations like the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

The omission did not go unnoticed. I happened to be visiting Winnipeg during its 2-week long multicultural festival known as Folklorama. The Festival, founded in 1970, is billed as the largest and longest running festival of its kind (as determined in 2010 by the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts), with over 46 Pavilions celebrating cultures from around the globe<sup>3</sup>. As I checked in with musician colleagues who happened to be performing at the Festival, several asked if I had seen the music exhibit at the Manitoba Museum, and more than a few voiced their disappointment that their type of music was not represented. The harshest criticism that I heard came from folklorist Robert Klymasz, whose career included seminal research documenting the musical traditions of Canada's Ukrainian community. Klymasz was upset that the rich musical traditions brought to Canada by immigrant groups, and the unique new musics that these groups developed within the Canadian context had not even been considered. He was so incensed that he drafted a scathing letter that was subsequently published in the Winnipeg Free Press. What Klymasz didn't realize was that the musical contributions of one facet of the Ukrainian community of Winnipeg had much deeper connections to many of the musical genres depicted in the Shakin' All Over Exhibit, and provided the catalyst and opportunity for a wide range of musical activity beyond the imagined borders of its ethno-cultural enclave.

Since I've already introduced Robert Klymasz into this discussion, I'd like to make use of the central concept of his study of Ukrainian Canadian folklore of the 1960s<sup>4</sup>. Klymasz identified the Ukrainian Canadians of that time as a culture in transition, shifting from an old world immigrant complex to a new world ethnic complex. A few of the key features of this shift inform the motivation for the development of a commercial recording industry among Ukrainian Canadians.

According to Klymasz, Ukrainian folk culture as found in Canada in the 1960s was a «unique conglomerate of in-going, on-going and out-going features<sup>5</sup>». He further synthesized his analysis to focus on seven selected traits that underscored the contrast between what he identified as the «old, immigrant folklore complex» and the «new, ethnic folklore complex<sup>6</sup>». He provides the following table to illustrate this contrast:

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<sup>1</sup> John Einarson. *Shaking All Over*. (Winnipeg: Variety Club of Manitoba, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> John Einarson. *Made in Manitoba: A Musical Legacy* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.folklorama.ca/festival>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Robert B. Klymasz. *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada* (New York: Arno Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Klymasz. *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada*, 128.

<sup>6</sup> Klymasz. *Ukrainian Folklore in Canada*, 127-128.

	Old, Immigrant Folklore Complex	New, Ethnic Folklore Complex
Societal and economic orientation	agrarian, with calendric and/or seasonal conservatism	urbanized, with breakdown of traditional calendric, cyclic framework
Millieu	closed, isolated, in-group circulation and setting	unrestricted
Carriers	peasants, with marked division of the various forms of traditional folkloric creativity according to sex	non-peasants, with a deeper and widened gap between the active, individual performer(s) and the passive spectator or audience
General structure	inward, subjective, with a high level of internal variation and diversity conditioned by traditional Old Country lines of parochial distribution; content, form and context are inextricably integrated with one another, and the entire folklore complex permeates the whole culture	objectified, accompanied by consolidation and standardization in an effort to formulate 'representative' items; emphasis on formal features; a fragmented, compartmentalized and loosely integrated complex composed of highly independent units which merge together and/or with the total culture only sporadically
Relation to the Old Country folklore complex	details of the old Country complex remain intact and/or are easily recalled; unconscious retention of Old World features; conscious hostility towards New World pressures to modify	the specifics of the Old Country folklore complex are forgotten, unknown or blurred; conscious selection of retentions; unaware of New World pressures to modify, change or adapt
Functions	varied and numerous, as per Old Country folklore complex	limited in number to two or three; to entertain and to promote ethnic identification and economic prosperity
Ways of transmission	maximum dependence on verbal, direct, interpersonal means of transmission for all oral genres as well as other forms of folkloric creativity	the direct, 'word of mouth' form of transmission is minimized and supplemented with help of indirect, non-personal and mechanical vehicles of transmission

### Immigrant to Ethnic

This societal shift provided the stimulus for a local Ukrainian Canadian recording industry. Commercial recordings of Ukrainian music had been available since the late 1920s. Frank Dojacek's Winnipeg Music Supply, a bookstore and music shop, was a central distribution point, shipping mail-order sales of 78 rpm records across the Prairies<sup>1</sup>. All of this music was imported. However, it wasn't imported from Ukraine but from the United States where companies such as Columbia, Victor, Okeh and Brunswick were all producing recordings for the emerging ethnic market<sup>2</sup>. The first commercial recording to feature the music of Ukrainians in Canada was recorded by Laura Boulton for the 1942 National Film Board film «Ukrainian Winter Holidays.» The music featured in the film was later released on Folkways Records, but not until 1956<sup>3</sup>.

This gap in the availability of local products inspired some entrepreneurs to capitalize on what they initially saw as primarily an economic opportunity. Inadvertently, they helped develop new and

<sup>1</sup> Paul Robertson. «Frank Dojacek and Mail-Order Shopping in the Prairies, 1906–1975» <http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmce/exhibitions/cpm/catalog/cat2108e.shtml>. Accessed February 25, 2016. <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/special/ourcityourworld/ukraine/bookstores-still-thrive---although-one-is-in-a-museum-160105085.html>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Spottswood. *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> *Ukrainian Christmas Songs* (New York: Folkways Records, 1956).

dynamic means of expression not only for Ukrainians, but also for Canadians in general. The following case studies illustrate this phenomenon.

### Alex Groshak

Alex Groshak was born in 1924 in Menzie, Manitoba<sup>1</sup>. Menzie is located almost directly in the centre of the Ukrainian bloc settlement located just south of Riding Mountain National Park. The history of the Groshak family mirrors that of the stereotypical pioneer myth. His grandfather was from Eastern European peasant stock and immigrated to Western Canada to take advantage of the Canadian Government's offer of a 160 acre parcel of homestead land for the registration fee of \$10.00<sup>2</sup>. However Groshak's own story quickly deviates from the prescribed mythology. With the onset of the Great Depression, his father uprooted the family and relocated, first to London, Ontario where he found a job in the construction industry, and then to Kirkland Lake, Ontario where he worked in the mines. In Kirkland Lake, Groshak met other Ukrainians removed from their traditional agricultural milieu and observed how cultural practices, such as the singing of traditional songs, could serve as an overt marker of identity and a unifying force for a community<sup>3</sup>.

Groshak returned to Manitoba in 1948 and immediately became involved in the music industry. He got a job with Quality Records of Toronto as their Western Canadian Sales Representative. In this capacity, Groshak became familiar with the marketing network for commercial recordings and established contacts that would assist him in subsequent business ventures. He was also assigned special projects such as organizing public appearances for artists on the label.

While Quality was primarily a company that re-released albums in Canada on behalf of American labels, it also produced original recordings by Canadian artists. Throughout the company's history, some significant releases included Bobby Gimby's Centennial song «Ca-Na-Da»<sup>4</sup>, early recordings by Stompin' Tom Connors, and singles by Winnipeg rock artists «Chad Allen and the Expressions,» including their first #1 Canadian hit, a cover of Johnny Kidd and the Pirates song «Shakin' All Over.» As a marketing gimmick to suggest that the recording was perhaps by a new British Invasion band, Quality credited the record to «Guess Who?» The band was rechristened and went on to achieve great success with that name<sup>5</sup>.

Among their accomplishments, Quality could also boast the first Ukrainian record album produced in Canada. In the early 1950's Alex Groshak arranged a recording session for the Ukrainian Male Chorus of Winnipeg under the direction of Walter Bohonos. The result was a collection of 6 songs on 3 78 rpm discs, in a specially designed package or «album»<sup>6</sup>.

Encouraged by his success with the Bohonos Choir, Groshak decided to form his own company, calling it Regis Records. The label was devoted almost exclusively to the music of old time dance bands, re-creating the music of the insular immigrant community. The instrumentation of these ensembles, lead by bandleaders such as Steve Berkowsky, Jack Kolt and Cam Chernicki, also tended adhere to traditional models, with the violin and the tsymbaly or hammered dulcimer occupying prominent roles. Early Regis recordings were released in the 78 rpm format, reflecting conservative old world resistance to change.

It was on the Regis label that Groshak scored his first big success and developed his first star in fiddler Jim Gregrash. Gregrash also hailed from the same rural bloc settlement near Sandy Lake, Manitoba. He began playing the fiddle at the age of 7 and by age 14 was playing at the three-day weddings that were the custom at that time. Thanks to Groshak's marketing savvy, Gregrash had a hit with his version of the «Ukrainian Wedding March.» Not only did Groshak place his records in major retail centres across the prairies, he had Gregrash make in store appearances to promote the product. Groshak notes that in one day he sold over 1000 copies of the 45 rpm disc while Gregrash was

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all information regarding Alex Groshak is based on recorded interview with Brian Cherwick, December, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Orest T. Martynovych. *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Period, 1891-1924* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Alex Groshak. Recorded interview with Brian Cherwick. 2004.

<sup>4</sup> <https://books.google.ca/books?id=4ScEAAAAMBAJ&pg=RA1-PA62&lpg=RA1-PA62&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Einarson. *American Woman: The Story of The Guess Who*, pp. 35-39.

<sup>6</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, Saturday, July 29, 1950, page 10. [http://www.russian-records.com/details.php?image\\_id=26655](http://www.russian-records.com/details.php?image_id=26655). Accessed February 25, 2016.

appearing at the Kresge department store in downtown Winnipeg, and went on to sell several thousands of copies.

While the Regis products were solid sellers, they didn't generate the volume of sales that Groshak was hoping for. A chance meeting with a young singing duo led Groshak to his next and greatest success and would prove the catalyst that would spark a groundswell of activity in Ukrainian commercial recording.

#### **Ukrainian Community in the 1960s**

By the 1960s, the Ukrainian community in Canada was a diverse group, as a result of the interaction between the various waves of immigration. Those who arrived in the first two major waves of immigration to Canada (the first in the period from 1891 to the outbreak of WWI, and the second in the interwar period) were nearing retirement age. Their children and grandchildren were leaving the rural areas in search of education and employment opportunities in the cities. In doing so, they were also leaving behind many of the customs and practices of their parents, including their traditional music, and assimilating into the Canadian mainstream.

The third wave, post WWII immigrants were also beginning to integrate themselves into Canadian society. However, being more politicized, especially in terms of Ukrainian nationalism, they were more interested in maintaining customs and insisting that their children do so as well<sup>1</sup>. Since they did not have to expend as much energy clearing land and building community infrastructure such as schools and churches as did the first two waves of immigrants, they could place more of an emphasis on other community activities<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Use of Language**

One can get an idea of the nature of the Ukrainian community during the 1960s by looking at data dealing with language retention. Information gathered from the 1961 Canada census showed that 473,337 Canadians claimed Ukrainian ancestry. Of this group, 361,496 or 64.4% listed Ukrainian as their mother tongue. The 1971 census showed a marked drop. Of the 580,660 who identified themselves as Ukrainian, only 309,860 or 48.9% claimed Ukrainian as their mother tongue and only 132,535, or 22.8% listed Ukrainian as the language most often spoken at home. This was a new question on the 1971 census, and therefore similar data was not available for previous years.<sup>3</sup>

These figures help illustrate the fact that although the use of Ukrainian language was an important indicator of Ukrainian identity at the beginning of the 1960s, it was considerably less important by the beginning of the next decade. However, the importance of the Ukrainian language, and the interplay between the various factions within the Ukrainian community at this point in time provided the backdrop for what would perhaps be the most innovative development to ever take place in Ukrainian music in Canada.

#### **«Mickey & Bunny and the D-Drifters-5»**

In the early 1960s a husband and wife singing duo known as «Mickey and Bunny» were performing as a country music act in clubs around Winnipeg. Modest Sklepowich («Mickey Sheppard») was a pharmacist and his wife Orysia Evanchuk («Bunny Evans») was a substitute school teacher. Sklepowich had played with a band called the "Sons of the Golden West" around his home town of Ethelbert, Manitoba, worked as a disc jockey at radio station CKDM in Dauphin, Manitoba, and had compiled a large repertoire of Ukrainian folk songs collected and polished in performances at country dances<sup>4</sup>.

Mickey and Bunny began their recording career when Alex Groshak heard their act at Winnipeg's Marlborough Hotel, and approached them with the idea to record some versions of their music in Ukrainian. On the lookout for marketable product, Groshak suggested they begin their experiment with a Ukrainian translation of Woody Guthrie's song «This Land is Your Land.» An English language version, which substituted Canadian place names for the American locations in Guthrie's

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<sup>1</sup> Lubomyr Y. Luciuk. «This Should Never Be Spoken or Quoted Publicly: Canada's Ukrainians and Their Encounter with the DPs.» In *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, ed. L.Y. Luciuk and S. Hryniuk. (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1991), 227.

<sup>2</sup> Luciuk, «This Should Never Be Spoken or Quoted Publicly», 203-204.

<sup>3</sup> W. Darcovych and P. Yuzyk. *A Statistical Compendium on the Ukrainians in Canada 1891-1976* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press), 221-239.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief discography of Sheppard see «Mickey Sings Ukrainian-English Beer Parlour Songs.» V-Records VLP 3064.

original had been popularized in a 1957 recording by the Canadian group The Travelers.<sup>1</sup> Groshak felt that the sentiments of solidarity and belonging might resonate with the Ukrainian community as it integrated into the Canadian mainstream. The duo enlisted the services of Mickey's father, William T. Sklepowich, a published author and poet, to generate the Ukrainian translation.

With the discovery of Mickey and Bunny, Groshak realized he needed a way to distinguish this new product from the old time recordings produced on Regis. He launched a new record label, V-Records, which was initially devoted primarily to Ukrainian artists. Eventually the label repackaged and distributed work by German, Polish and Scandinavian artists, as well as American polka acts such as Frankie Yankovic.

Groshak acquired an enterprising and energetic partner in Mickey Sheppard. Once the seed for the translation idea was planted, Mickey developed a plan that would involve creating a unique sound and marketing that sound in ways that were equally unique for the Ukrainian community. He enlisted the services of a young dance band known as the D-Drifters-5 to act as his back-up group. Armed with the newest of electric instruments, these young musicians were able to provide accompaniment that accurately recreated the feel of the English language hits they were covering. The loose old time performance style of the previous generation of Ukrainian musicians was replaced with tight arrangements and vocal harmonies.

The single most important feature of the Mickey and Bunny sound was the way in which they moved back and forth between singing English and Ukrainian lyrics within the same piece of music. They employed this technique with great success in their renditions of popular country and western hits of the time. They would often begin a piece in English, then move to verses translated into Ukrainian. The group coined the phrase «half *na piv*» [half and half] songs in order to describe this style (*piv* is the Ukrainian word for half). The phrase «half *na piv*» has since become a popular term among Ukrainian Canadians to describe any macaronic song or manner of speech.<sup>2</sup>

In order to further control the quality of the group's recordings, Mickey purchased and installed a two-track recording studio in the basement of his home. This became not only the base of operations for the Mickey and Bunny ensemble, but also provided access to recording technology to number of other groups who would eventually make their way onto the V Records label.

Groshak and Sklepowich built upon the lessons learned with the Jim Gregorash recordings, and devised an even more elaborate marketing plan based on public performances, in-store appearances and mainstream radio exposure. The Mickey and Bunny troupe traveled extensively across Western Canada, and made forays into eastern Canada and the eastern United States, including a well-received concert in Toronto's Massey Hall. Concert performances were usually preceded by in-store appearances, performances on local radio, or on regional and national TV. In October of 1965 fellow Ukrainian Canadian Juliette Sysak welcomed the troupe on her national CBC television program where they performed their Ukrainian version of «This Land is Your Land».

Alex Groshak struck gold when he devised his Ukrainian English musical hybrid. By his accounts, the Mickey and Bunny single of «This Land is Your Land» sold over 100,000 copies, an unprecedented amount for a regional ethnic record. During their peak producing years of 1964--67 they recorded two albums featuring translations of country and western hits, one album of translations of English gospel music, two albums of Christmas carols (one of traditional Ukrainian carols and one of translations of English carols), and one album of a «Simulated Live Performance». In total, Mickey and Bunny produced 18 albums on the V Records label.

Their backing group the D-Drifters-5 had a prolific output of their own in that 3 year span, recording three albums of Ukrainian folk songs, and one of Ukrainian folk dance melodies. Perhaps their most notorious claim to fame is an album featuring the songs of the Beatles and other contemporary pop hits translated into Ukrainian.

This success of these groups provided the catalyst for the evolution of an entire Ukrainian recording industry in western Canada. The V-Records catalogue grew to over 150 items. Groshak's company eventually developed complimentary labels such as K Records, UK Records and Ollytone Records, each with its own specific focus. They also spawned a number of imitators and competitors, all striving for the same kind of success. Groshak himself looked for ways to expand his business,

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-travellers-emc/>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> M. Oryschuk. «Vystup ansambliu «Miki I Bani» [Performance by the Mickey and Bunny Ensemble]. *Homin Ukrainy*, 17(49), 1965.

branching out into television production with a syndicated program called the Polka Warehouse, featuring many acts from the V Records label. He opened a retail outlet known as Ethnic Records that featured not only his own products, but also those of his competitors. And his company became involved in community development projects, such as sponsoring annual tymbaly or hammered dulcimer contests that were eventually featured on subsequent V Records LPs<sup>1</sup>.

Alex Groshak was not averse to some musical excursions that were outside of his usual ethnic comfort zone. As documented in the Manitoba Music Experience exhibit, 1960s Winnipeg was a veritable hive of rock music activity. Hundreds of bands performed in an extensive network of school, community club and church dances geared to the teen market. As bands gained prominence they drew the attention of radio DJs, who, in turn, would promote the band's live appearances. One of the bands that Bob Bradburn of radio station CKRC adopted was a south Winnipeg group known as the Squires, led by a high school aged Neil Young. In July of 1963 Bradburn arranged a recording session for them at his radio station's two-track studio, one of few such facilities in the city (one of the others being the Sklepowich set-up). Two months later a 45 rpm single, *The Sultan* with the flip side *Aurora* was released on the V-Records label. Why this fledgling rock band chose a label predominantly known for its ethnic releases may appear a mystery. But, in fact, Groshak's operation was the only professional recording label headquartered in Winnipeg at the time. As such, they were the first local label to enter the rock field. Other bands had to rely on labels from eastern Canada (such as Quality Records in the case of the early Guess Who).

According to John Einarson, The Squires were V-Records first and last foray into more contemporary sounds<sup>2</sup>. This is not entirely true. Less than a year later the D-Drifters were creating their own covers of rock, folk and pop music, albeit in a language other than English<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Nester Shydrowsky**

Nester Shydrowsky was raised on a farm in the Ukrainian block settlement situated southeast of Winnipeg.<sup>4</sup> This was the one of the first areas to be settled by the earliest Ukrainian immigrants to Canada and place names like Vita, Shevchenko, Rosa, and Tolstoi reflect that rich history. From these humble beginnings, Shydrowsky has grown a business that is not only the largest producer of Ukrainian music in Canada, but is also one of the largest producers of Aboriginal music in North America. His company, Sunshine Records, and its subsidiary labels has a catalogue that features both Native and non-Native country, folk, rock, and hip-hop, Metis fiddle music, and one of the largest collections of powwow music.

Shydrowsky moved to Winnipeg in the late 1960s. His dream was to become a part of the network of Ukrainian bands playing the hotels of north Winnipeg and making records for the V Records label. And, indeed, his band, the Royal Polka Kings did release a number of records on V Records, and by 1966 Shydrowsky was part of the company's staff working in sales and distribution. Like his mentor, Alex Groshak, had done during his time with Quality Records, Shydrowsky became familiar with the distribution network for commercial recordings across western Canada. By 1972, he was ready to strike out on his own creating Sunshine Records.

Shydrowsky's motivations for establishing a new label were based on his observations of changes in the markets he was familiar with. While the success of V Records was precipitated by the cultural shift among Canada's Ukrainians, by the 1970s the audience for old world dance melodies, or even Ukrainian English hybrid music that had by then grown predictable, was dwindling. Shydrowsky wanted to create a new company with a diversified catalogue catering to a range of musical tastes.

From the very start, Shydrowsky's catalogue was diversified. While his first releases featured artists like Ukrainian mandolinist Mary Chornick and former V Records comedy singer Peter Hnatiuk, they also featured Metis fiddler Reg Bouvette and aboriginal singer Winston Wuttanee. It was Wuttanee's suggestion that Sunshine record and distribute music by the powwow drum group Big Thunderchild Singers. This was Shydrowsky's entry into the powwow market. While he felt the works of Aboriginal country or pop artists might have some cross-cultural appeal, he realized that powwow music was a complicated niche market that appealed predominantly to insiders who understand the

<sup>1</sup> *V-Records Ltd. Annual Cymbaly Highlights Contest 1973* (Winnipeg: V-Records, SVL-3107).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/music/Cultural-crossover-Label-tapped-into-demand-for-Ukrainian-music-317028941.html>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> *D-Drifters-5 Sing and Play Beatles and other English Hits in Ukrainian* (Winnipeg: V-Records VLP-3025).

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all information regarding Nester Shydrowsky is based on recorded interview with Brian Cherwick, September, 2011.

genre's intricacies. However, once the label had a number of powwow records in its catalogue, Shydrowsky and his staff, especially producer Brandon Friesen, realized that these were the company's biggest sellers. They made a concerted effort to expand the Sunshine's catalogue of powwow releases, with successful results.

Based on their success in the powwow market, Sunshine has been able to attract top-flight Aboriginal artists in a number of other genres. In 1994, the first year that Juno Awards were presented for Aboriginal music, a Sunshine produced recording by New Brunswick artists J Hubert Francis and Eagle Feather was among the nominees for the Award.<sup>1</sup> In 1998 Mishi Donovan's recording «Spirit Within» won the Juno for Best Music of Aboriginal Canada Recording<sup>2</sup>. Sunshine continues to expand its offering of First Nations music to include genres such as Native American Flute Music, Children's music, Comedy, and Blues among others. Most recently, their sub-label URBN-NRG has produced a range of urban and hip hop music.

In many ways, the cultural and economic trends reflected in the Aboriginal music represented in the Sunshine catalogue are not unlike the processes that the Ukrainian community experienced in its shift from an immigrant to ethnic culture. Like the Ukrainians of the 1960s, Aboriginal Canadians are increasingly leaving their homes in rural Canada and relocating in urban centres. The 2006 Statistics Canada Census reported that the Aboriginal population of Winnipeg was 63, 745<sup>3</sup>. This represents the highest urban Aboriginal population of any city in Canada and accounts for almost 10% of Winnipeg's total population. Most of the First Nations population lives in the city's North End. Coincidentally, this is the same neighbourhood that was formerly home to Winnipeg's sizeable population of Jews, Ukrainians, Poles and other immigrants from Eastern Europe for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. Traditional Aboriginal music genres, like powwow music, continue to enjoy an ongoing, and even resurgent popularity, much like old world songs and folk dance melodies have for Ukrainians. And yet younger generations of Aboriginal musicians are turning to and adapting products from the contemporary cultural mainstream, like hip hop, much in the way that artists like Mickey and Bunny and the D-Drifters adapted country and rock music to speak to the new sensibilities of their community.

Nester Shydrowsky may have chosen Selkirk Avenue as the location for his business because it was once the centre of the Eastern European business district of the North End (and, interestingly, a block from the former home of V Records). He is now located in the heart of the Aboriginal community. And much in the way that some stubborn stalwarts like the Todaschuk Sisters Ukrainian Boutique, Wawel's Meat Market or Gunn's Bakery refuse to relocate even though their clientele grows increasingly smaller and their old neighbours are replaced by the new residents of the North End, Shydrowsky stubbornly continues the production of old time Ukrainian music. He sees it as a mission. And while his sensibilities as a businessman inform his activities in the field of aboriginal music, his passion as a musician and a member of a close-knit ethno-cultural community fuel his individual creative output. His own band «The Ukrainian Old Timers» have released over 30 albums of Ukrainian dance and comedy music<sup>5</sup>. The musical infrastructure he's developed, which include his own recording studio, duplication systems and distribution networks allow him this luxury. His volume of sales of Aboriginal music allows him a place at the table for Ukrainian music. The Ukrainian Oldtimers' music may be decidedly low brow, but it can be found on the racks in Walmart (where it is difficult to get your music stocked) and fine meat stores all across western Canada.

Shydrowsky continues to look for new ways to promote the music he loves. He applies many of the lessons he's learned marketing other genres of music. URBN NRG artists, Da Skelpa Squad won the best Hip Hop Album at the 2007 Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards<sup>6</sup>. Their popularity is

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juno\\_Awards\\_of\\_1994#Best\\_Music\\_of\\_Aboriginal\\_Canada\\_Recording](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juno_Awards_of_1994#Best_Music_of_Aboriginal_Canada_Recording). Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juno\\_Awards\\_of\\_1998#Best\\_Music\\_of\\_Aboriginal\\_Canada\\_Recording](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juno_Awards_of_1998#Best_Music_of_Aboriginal_Canada_Recording). Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4611040&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&Data=Count&SearchText=Winnipeg&SearchType=Begins&Se archPR=46&B1=All&Custom="](http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4611040&Geo2=PR&Code2=46&Data=Count&SearchText=Winnipeg&SearchType=Begins&Se archPR=46&B1=All&Custom=). Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Russ Gourlock. *The Mosaic Village* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2010), 217.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.worldwidesunshine.com/eMerchantPro/pc/Ukrainian-Oldtimers-c175.htm>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.canab.com/mainpages/events/archive\\_files/music\\_awards/2007winners.html#raphiphopalbum](http://www.canab.com/mainpages/events/archive_files/music_awards/2007winners.html#raphiphopalbum). Accessed February 25, 2016.



partly a result of their videos, which average between 60 and 190,000 views on Youtube<sup>1</sup>. In an attempt to recreate the success of dance crazes like the Macarena and the Bird Dance, Shydrowsky went about producing a video for the Ukrainian Oldtimers. His strategy may be a good one, as his video of «The Perogy Dance» has already received over 80,000 views, although whether those views translate into sales has still yet to be seen<sup>2</sup>. While the similarities between the videos of these two groups are almost non-existent, Shydrowsky understands the value of a good marketing tool.

Its not only Sunshine's artists who have garnered awards. Shydrowsky was presented the Music Industry Award at the 2004 Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards<sup>3</sup>. When no similar awards from the Ukrainian community were forthcoming, he created his own. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Ukrainian Musician's Association, which presents Ukrainian Music Hall of Fame and Legendary Achievement Awards to honour significant activity in the field of Ukrainian music<sup>4</sup>.

This all brings us back to our initial discussion of the Manitoba Music Scene. While the organizers of the 2010 exhibit are still working toward establishing a permanent home to recognize the Province's music community, Shydrowsky has already secured a place for celebrating Ukrainian music. At the same time that he established the Ukrainian Musicians Association and Awards, he also began collecting artifacts and photographs from the families of well-known Ukrainian musicians. A temporary exhibit was set up at one of the Associations' fundraising events, and then the collection was housed in a vacant storefront on Selkirk Avenue. In 2010, Shydrowsky negotiated with the management of Canada's National Ukrainian Festival in Dauphin, Manitoba to have the collection permanently installed in one of the buildings in the Festival's Pioneer Village museum.<sup>5</sup> Thousands of summer festival visitors have had the opportunity to learn a little about the contributions of musicians from Manitoba's Ukrainian community. However, while intra-group recognition is important, it is still hoped that one day the story of this vibrant industry will take its rightful place alongside the other stories that make up the Manitoba Music Scene.

*В 2010 році в Музеї Манітоби була розгорнута тематична виставка з нагоди святкування багатой і багатогранної музичної спадщини цієї канадської провінції. На жаль, експозиція залишила поза увагою доробок етнічних громад, серед яких вагоме місце посідає українська спільнота. Зокрема, вклад лише одного прошарку цієї громади тісно переплетений з багатьма музичними жанрами, представленими в експозиції, і виходить далеко за межі уявних кордонів етнічного культурного анклаву. Дана стаття висвітлює діяльність двох музичних продюсерів – Алекса Грошака, який стояв у витоків українсько-канадської звукозаписуючої індустрії, і Нестора Шидловського, який досьгодні працює в цій галузі і, до того ж, є активним дистрибутором музики північно-американських аборигенів.*

**Ключові слова:** індустрія звукозапису, українська спільнота, музична спадщина, музичний продюсер, Канада.

*В 2010 году в Музее Манитобы была развернута тематическая выставка посвященная празднованию богатого и многогранного музыкального наследия этой канадской провинции. К сожалению, экспозиция не отразила вклада этнических общин, среди которых важное место занимает украинская диаспора. В частности, вклад только одной прослойки этой общины тесно переплетен со многими музыкальными жанрами, представленными в экспозиции, и выходит далеко за пределы очерченных границ этнического культурного анклава. Данная статья освещает деятельность двух музыкальных продюсеров – Алекса Грошака, стоявшего у истоков украинско-канадской индустрии звукозаписи, и Нестора Шидловского, работающего до наших дней в этой отрасли, к тому же, активного дистрибутора музыки северно-американских аборигенов.*

**Ключевые слова:** индустрия звукозаписи, украинская община, музыкальное наследие, музыкальный продюсер, Канада.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the video for the group's song «On Fire» has over 188,000 views. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITvbI6\\_9Z6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITvbI6_9Z6s). Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQIBofrxRkI>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.canab.com/mainpages/events/archive\\_files/music\\_awards/2004winners.html](http://www.canab.com/mainpages/events/archive_files/music_awards/2004winners.html). Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> <http://ukrainianmusiciansassociation.org>. Accessed February 25, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cnuf.ca/about/selo-ukrainia-venue>. Accessed February 25, 2016.