



ravenshoe ramblings

column by Roger Pires

Cleared for takeoff

My son and I had the good fortune to spend the Christmas break in Portugal. Admittedly, it was an unorthodox choice. December on the Iberian coast is not the ideal time to sun your pale, winter-bound hide. Even in these southern latitudes a day at the beach is not complete without an ice chipper and the threat of hypothermia. Only the most ardent beachcombers or the criminally insane would consider taking a dip in the angry Atlantic at that time of the year.

But this was no ordinary vacation. It wasn't about frying in the semitropical heat. It was instead, a voyage of personal discovery. I would be returning to the land of my forebears to explore my roots. I had aunts, uncles, and cousins I hadn't seen in decades. In fact, a whole generation of Pires' had sprouted since I last hopped the pond. Obviously, talking about ourselves isn't the only thing my family does well. Above all, I was fulfilling a promise I had made to my dad. Before he passed away, he asked me to deliver some of his personal effects to his brother and sister in Portugal. What better time than Christmas.

The trip would be especially enlightening for my son. In his fifteen years he had left the province of Ontario exactly once, on a three-day school trip to Montreal. Hardly a world tour. Since my parents were the only ones to emigrate, we could hold the Canadian leg of the Pires family reunion in a phone booth. So the kid was pumped at the prospect of spending Christmas surrounded by people that shared his last name. But there was still the potentially thorny issue of communication. He spoke no Portuguese and I wasn't much better. The situation was manageable as long as we stuck to the confines of Portuguese 101. "Good night." "Good morning." "I wish to speak to my lawyer." Beyond that we were at the mercy of my cousins to translate. And this is where it could all go off the rails. Many a trans-Atlantic family feud has begun over an unfortunate malapropism. In a country where wine flows like water, a well-oiled translator could easily turn, "Thank you for this lovely dinner" into "Your mother-in-law is a gorilla".

We needn't have worried. Apparently we weren't the only ones looking forward to our trip. A few weeks before our departure, several of the kids messaged their "Canadian cousin" on Facebook in perfect English. Why bother bringing a dictionary? Introductions were made. Parties were planned. And I had a submission for the good people at "Jeopardy". Answer: The native English speaker. Question: What is the laziest creature on Earth?

Unfortunately my wife was unable to join us. She had not amassed the required vacation time. This came as a mixed blessing. Although saddened she couldn't accompany her boys on their pilgrimage, there was a main bathroom in dire need of some TLC. And no matter how adept your hand at redecorating, it is impossible to churn out the required masterpiece with a couple of jocks littering your workspace with their sweaty long johns. So with mixed emotions she gave royal assent to the voyage.

It had been years since I last had to pack for a trip overseas. I use the term loosely. I always thought "pack" was Latin for "roll all your belongings into a giant ball, stuff it into a suitcase, and have someone sit on it while you zip it up." That was before I met my wife. Her organization skills are legendary. Had she overseen the loading of the Ark, she could've added a couple of jumbo jets and the entire cast of "Riverdance" and still have had enough room for a gymnasium and a movie theatre. (Author's note: I am by no means implying she was actually around when Noah built the Ark). So I left this logistical nightmare in her capable hands.

The bulk of the payload was taken up by gifts for the kids. Since we would also be cultural emissaries, the theme would be Canada and all things Canadian. There were hats, mitts, and scarves for the girls; mini sticks with the logos of the Canadian NHL teams for the boy; a jigsaw puzzle of the Canadian flag with each piece depicting a scene from Canadian life; a container of maple-infused shortbread cookies which almost didn't make it into the suitcase; and other assorted Canadiana. Throw in two bottles of Niagara wine and I would need a shipping container to get this stuff over there. My wife made it all disappear along with a week's worth of clothes and she still made the weight limit.

When she had completed her optical illusion we hauled the suitcases downstairs and stacked them by the front door. I could now give my undivided attention to a nagging little detail I had been ignoring as if it were a "check engine" light: I was about to get on an airplane! Once upon a time I embraced hurtling across the stratosphere in a metal tube with nothing but the deep, blue sea below me, as an adventure. Twenty-five years later and scant hours from being launched into inner space I realized I hadn't updated my will. I asked my son if he was excited about the prospect of air travel. He shrugged with teenaged sang-froid. "I'll just sleep through it." As I felt my palms start to sweat, I couldn't help wonder if Graval came in barbeque flavour.



the barris beat

column by Ted Barris

Making a musical tradition

A couple of weeks ago, I had a conversation with some of my journalism students about the annual parade of awards shows - the Grammys, the People's Choice Awards, the Oscars and the rest. The subject of this year's Canadian music awards, coming up in April, eventually cropped up. They had all heard of the Junos, sure. But then - with my usual tendency to target the trivial - I asked if anyone knew the origin of the Junos. "Oh, it's the name of the Canadian beach on D-Day," one said.

"Yes, you're right on the D-Day reference," I said. "But not the musical one."

"I know," said one of my more erudite students. "Juno is the Roman goddess of marriage and queen of the gods."

"Right again," I said. "But she's got nothing to do with the Juno Music Awards in Canada."

I was nearly at the end of keeping them in suspense, but not quite. I asked if they had ever wondered where Canada's popular music industry came from - its recording studios, record labels, music distribution system, music production industry, hit parade, a.k.a. its star system. Oh, did I mean where Justin Bieber or The Sheepdogs or Feist came from? Well, sort of. Clearly, my students needed a short lecture about the birth of an independent Canadian music industry. And, yes, it's tied to the Juno Awards. I reminded them that Justin Trudeau had a father named Pierre, who was Prime Minister of Canada from 1968 to 1979 (then again from 1980 to 1984). I explained that among Trudeau's priorities were justice, multilingualism, the family, free lifestyle choices, multiculturalism and participatory democracy, "a just society." But Trudeau, I suggested, was perhaps most passionate and proud of Canadian culture.

That's when Trudeau enlisted the talents of a contemporary of his, a Montrealer from a working-class family, a fellow student at the University of Paris and co-founder of the dissident magazine *Cité Libre*. Pierre Juneau joined the National Film Board in 1949, founded the Montreal International Film Festival in 1959 and became the first chair of the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) in 1968. That's when Trudeau challenged Juneau to research the Canadian music industry with an eye to saving it from being totally overwhelmed by the American pop music scene, its youthful energy, its powerful traditions, its vast radio signal reach and its multi-million-dollar star system. North of the 49th Parallel, Juneau's investigation listened to producers, record label reps, artist and repertoire scouts, musicians, sound technicians, radio DJs and even the public to find a way to save Canadian music.

On Jan. 18, 1971, Juneau, as chair of the CRTC, introduced Canadian Content regulations. The CanCon rules required AM radio stations to give no less than 30 per cent air play to Canadian artists from 6 a.m. to midnight each day. The result, of course, was a veritable boom in Canadian music production and the flourishing of such Canadian artists as Ann Murray, Lighthouse, Blood Sweat and Tears, Bruce Cockburn, The Guess Who, Edward Bear, Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen, Ian and Sylvia and Crowbar, to name a few. That same year, 1971 (42 years ago this month) the first Juno Awards (named in Pierre Juneau's honour) were handed out at the St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto.

"From an industry that has barely begun to burgeon," wrote Marci McDonald in the *Toronto Star*, "(the Junos) was a ceremony that made all those interminable glory shows, the Grammys and the Oscars ... look like amateur night at the high school gym."

And that first year of the Juno Awards, the creators of the awards, RPM Magazine in Canada, recognized Pierre Juneau as Music Industry Man of the Year.

I remember the earliest years of CanCon. In those times, I worked both on air and in print covering the Canadian music scene in earnest. As a disc jockey on such stations as CKLY AM in Lindsay, Ont., and in Toronto on CJRT (now Jazz FM) I programmed my music ensuring that one in three record choices I made was Canadian. It wasn't a chore. I loved the idea and most often preferred playing David Clayton Thomas to Jim Morrison, Joni Mitchell over Joan Baez, Ronnie Hawkins over Kenny Rogers, Salome Bay over Aretha Franklin, Murray McLauchlan over Arlo Guthrie, Neil Young over Bob Dylan, even The Band over the Beatles. And it wasn't just the colours of the flag; it was the resonance of the music that delivered, defined and distinguished us from the rest.

As much as I take pride in recounting his story to my journalism and my broadcasting students, I can never say that I met Pierre Juneau face-to-face. I spoke with him on the phone once. I thanked him for his life's work - being granddaddy to a Canadian music scene that thrives today because of his foresight. Pierre Juneau died a year ago this week.

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