

MUSIC CONFERENCE



ROY ANTAL/Leader-Post.

Charity Marsh is the organizer of Spanning the Distance: Regionalism and Reflections on Popular Music in Canada, a conference being held at the University of Regina this weekend. Here, she stands in front of posters promoting the event.

# Examining popular music

By ANDREW MATTE  
Leader-Post

Discussions about how technology has affected the music world and how music scenes differ from city to city are among the topics at a conference this weekend in Regina held to examine the bottomless pit of issues surrounding popular music.

The conference, held by the Canadian arm of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, is held annually to give academics, musicians and music fans an opportunity to discuss the issues that come from the emerging study of pop music and how it affects people, cultures and communities.

It's a bit of a coup for the University of Regina, which is playing host to the conference, because it will be the first time the conference has been held west of Ontario.

Charity Marsh, the conference organizer, views the choice of Regina as evidence that both the academic community and the public are acknowledging that pop music merits more attention from universities.

"It has been a tough struggle for some

universities to allow for the study of (pop) music to be a part of their music departments, or to have the courses mandatory rather than have the (pop) music classes as elective," Marsh says.

Marsh, whose doctorate means she is a musicologist, says society is slowly understanding that music has important effects beyond the simple performing of music for the sake of entertainment.

"Music is constantly in our lives," she says. "One of the things I am always challenging my students to do is actually start thinking about it, not just passively listening to music but actively thinking about what it is you're listening to."

"There are just so many larger social, cultural aspects to music that people don't often think about."

Marsh says there are heady issues that will be discussed, but there will be lots of public-friendly discussions as well.

"There is just so much going on, like from the production side of things, from album art to how a guitar player holds his guitar and why he holds it that way and what all that means," she says.

"People won't be overwhelmed with

academic jargon. With the round-table discussions, they will be able to participate. While it's still a lot of academics and university people, there is still a lot of interest from communities from outside the university."

The conference is called Spanning the Distance: Regionalism and Reflections on Popular Music in Canada, and will include speeches, discussion and performances by professors, journalists and musicians. It kicks off Friday morning and culminates Sunday night with a performance by DJ Kinder. The conference includes a Friday concert at Darke Hall featuring Gary Fjellgaard, Kinnie Starr, Leela Gilday and Goldenmile.

Discussion topics include "Perspectives on Contemporary Indigenous Popular Music," "Complicated Journeys: Mapping Music Meanings" and "Space, Place, and Performance: Regional Popular Music Scenes."

For instance, the discussion titled "Media, Technology and the Industry" features Barry Promane from the University of Western Ontario in

London, an expert on the production of rock DVDs; William Echard from Ottawa's Carleton University, who has studied record reviews published in *Rolling Stone* magazine; Louis D'Alton from Western, who is an expert on copyright issues; and David Gerhard and J.J. Nixdorf from the U of R, who are experts on the use of computers and live performance.

Marsh says the inclusion of Prairie issues such as aboriginal music, as well as the growing interest of hip hop in Saskatchewan, might draw interest from outside the university world.

"There is some really challenging provocative history that's happening here in a new genre," she says. "It's not, perhaps, a traditional genre, but a contemporary genre that young people are responding to and speaking through — and all of a sudden you have a whole lot of new social relations happening."

A weekend pass costs \$80 (\$30 for students) and includes lunches and a ticket to the Friday night concert. Day passes cost \$30. Tickets are available at the U of R music department, X-Ray Records and Vintage Vinyl. For more information, visit <http://uregina.ca/IASPM>