

Are You Listening?

I am frustrated, I don't know if you are. Over the last few years the most advertised music and entertainment seems to have become worse and worse. I know that there is good music out there, but I used to hear more of it on radio and TV. I am in the music business so I understand what has gone on which makes it worse.

Basically the big record companies have been going public and consolidating over the last 10 to 15 years to make more money, and in the process of hiring more lawyers and accountants they've lost sight of finding good bands, making good records, and caring about fans. Most of the big radio and media companies have followed suit and now everything is based on stock prices and quarterly earnings. Accountants don't know music so they put a bunch of money into a few really homogenized, talentless artists. Radio is more focused on selling advertising than on giving you good music, so they ignore you and take a lot of money from a few record companies to play those mediocre songs that keep you listening long enough to sell you something. TV is only interested in the moments ratings so you get "***Behind Closet Doors- Paris Hilton's Shoe Collection***" rather than "***Behind The Music***" or anything that remotely inspires.

Now, of course, talentless, heartless blasé music is not all that TV, radio and major labels are promoting, but we seem to be only a few steps away from that. Basically we the fans have been treated like we don't know better. It seems pretty obvious to me why, with what's being offered, live concert ticket sales, album sales and radio listenership have been declining and alternatives like downloading and direct internet sales have grown. Instead of improving what is being marketed to fans, the music industry has sent the RIAA after music fans looking for quality music on the Internet. That sends all of us music fans running and screaming toward anything resembling quality. At least I am.

What do we do? We need to listen, support and stand up for great music of all kinds, whether it is on TV, radio or anywhere else. This is our problem to solve and we can't expect things to change if we the music fans are disengaged. We also need to go where there is quality, choice and trust. The internet and independent companies are that place, and people are already going in droves. *Taking Back Sunday* had the highest selling independent album debut ever with indie label *Victory Records*, over

300,000 copies in one week. Downloading stores are selling downloads by the millions. Artist websites are bringing fans together. *ipods* allow you to take your music with you wherever you go. Great music is out there and people are finding it.

I think this could be the beginning of a new era for music and all intellectual property, but we have to want it. Technology, by putting the control in the hands of fans, artists and independent companies, has given us a chance to take hold of great music again.

It is time for us as fans of quality, choice and trust to step up and say **ARE YOU LISTENING?** We need to say it to our friends who are jaded about music not being good anymore, because music is not only good, now it is better than ever, and you can find it through artist's websites, download stores, live concerts, independent radio, media and record stores. We need to say it to radio, TV, press and record companies and also to bands, because they need to know you want music that speaks to you. Artists in this industry have been brainwashed more than anyone into thinking that they have no power without the corporate music companies. Those artists have forgotten that all the power is in the hands of the music they make and you, their fans. You can send a strong message to all artists that it is time to stand up for their music...and for you.

The artists that bring you quality, choice and trust are your partners along with the internet and independent companies. They are taking risks to give you more than the mediocre and we need to stand up and say yes, we are here and yes, **WE ARE LISTENING.** If we as the fans do not get involved we are the worst offenders.

Areyoulistening.com is just one part of the solution to a problem. We believe the most important thing is building back quality, choice and trust between artists and their fans and the way to do that is to bring them together and empower them to do just that. Our goal for AYL.com is to be a portal for music fans to discover new artists and for artists to create a direct relationship with those fans. We all have a part in the solution and we are trying to do ours. This is just the beginning.

Thanks for listening.