



By John McGlasson - GJD Contributor

Has the public gotten smarter? That's worthy of vigorous debate, but it seems the American public have largely turned against "Big"; everything; Big Tobacco, Big Oil, Big Finance, Big TV News, the list goes on and on, but more recently, and it seems almost simultaneously, Big Music and Big Politics.

Only a few months ago, candidates who were seen as inevitable for their parties' nominations were practically lamenting having to go through the formalities of the election process, so what happened? Were they inevitable because the people loved them and were supporting them on a grass-roots level? Or was it because Big TV News told them so every night? And who told Big TV news they were inevitable but the candidates themselves, and the political machines behind them.

It stinks of the kind of top-down, total-saturation publicity campaign we see constantly for a new album from big labels; a recent great example is Beyonce's new album last year. We saw her EVERYWHERE, on every talk show, pimping numerous products on commercials, morning, noon, and night. I even saw her in a cable company's commercial holding a cheesy piece of jewelry in her mouth that read "upgrade", with a special tune of the same name written just for the occasion.

There used to be a line drawn, where crossing it was tacky, and was seen by the public as selling out. If you ask the public, it's still there, just ask John Mellencamp. I read on an industry newsletter where his manager wrote that they'd have sold more albums had they not released the Chevy commercial featuring a song from the yet-to-be-released album so far ahead of the album's release. Out of touch to say the least. It's more probable in my opinion that people didn't buy the album because of the Chevy commercial. In the public's subconscious, it appears desperate when a previously respected artist either 1) needs money bad enough to sell a song for a truck commercial (Steve Irwin) or 2) will whore themselves out in any tacky way they're told by the label and management to get into the public eye.

As soon as the public realized they had a choice, they chose. Something else. It used to be if you wanted music, you went to the record store. You paid the price they dictated, or you didn't get music other than on the radio, and they dictated that as well. If you didn't like what they majors put out there for you, you didn't get anything on your turntable. Then came indie labels like Sub-Pop, Touch & Go, Shrapnel, and countless others, who offered listeners something outside the mainstream, where the dollar is not the only concern.

The parallels between Obama's recent rise and overtaking of Clinton Inc. in the Democrat presidential primary race and that of an indie band coming out of nowhere to sell millions of albums are astounding. The people don't care that maybe the band may have only been together a year, write half-ass songs and are half-ass musicians, selling an album with half-assed production, they found out about it from a friend, who found out about it from a friend, who found out about it in an indie music magazine and searched the web for it. They like it because they weren't told to like it by the "authorities". Quality and substance, even music, may have nothing to do with it. It's anti-establishment.

What Obama's doing wouldn't have been possible 10 years ago. You can't ignore the "Anyone But Bush" feeling that's now evolved into an "Anyone but the Bushes or Clintons" feeling, but I see Obama's rise as a very public rejection of the people who normally tell people what they should watch, eat, care about, listen to, and vote for. How is this possible? The freedom of choice brought forth by the internet.

A brand new poll by polling firm Zogby shows that almost 70% of the American public believe that traditional journalism channels are "out of touch with mainstream society". A news and info junkie like me sees almost every story that comes out before the Big TV outlets get it to the people, because we're all getting it from the same places. Even cable news, on a 24-hour news cycle, is behind me in getting information. I don't need them.

Any more than I need Big Labels to tell me what's worth listening to, or need the Big Government to tell me what to eat, what to drive, who my doctor should be, how to raise my kid, or what issues should matter to me, I can think for myself, and maybe for the first time in history, people are truly free to do that when it comes to aspects of their lives where these decisions were largely made for them in the limited choices that filtered down to the mainstream. The filter's been blown off the pipeline. Choose wisely. Thanks for reading!

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