

For Three Russian Rock Albums Released In The West Soviets Charge Copyright Violations

MOSCOW Recordings of Soviet artists released by three Western labels in the last 18 months are an infringement of national copyrights, according to a newspaper article here. Big Time Records in Los Angeles and BBC Records in London are named in the article, published in the youth daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

Tapes obtained by U.S. singer Joanna Stingray in Leningrad in 1986, featuring local bands Aquarium, Kino, Alice, and Strange Games, formed the basis of a double album, "Red Wave," released in the U.S. by Big Time. Copies that have found their way back to the Soviet Union are collectors' items, changing hands for as much as \$230.

Soviet copyright agency VAAP says that the label, which has paid no royalties, has infringed copyright. A similar charge has been made against journalist Tom Johnson, who is responsible for the French cassette release "Rock Russe," which features Aquarium, Kino, Strange Games, Bravo, and Telephone. No consent for the release was given by VAAP or *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga*, the Soviet

trading agency for exports of prerecorded and printed music.

Finally, the article cites BBC Records, which in December 1985 issued "Comrades" by avant-garde artist Sergei Kuriokhin's Popular

The 'Red Wave' album is selling in the Soviet Union for up to \$230

Mechanics group to accompany a BBC-TV series about the Soviet Union.

In London, however, a BBC Records spokesman says the label has received no word, official or unofficial, to indicate there is anything amiss with the basis on which the recording was contracted. The label spokesman also says that any request for royalties would be "a little strange" coming from a Soviet establishment that has suppressed performances and recordings by the artist concerned.

It is not clear to what extent

VAAP itself is involved in the charges. Observers here see the incidents as demonstrating rather than both VAAP and *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga*, as the major promoters and distributors of Soviet music abroad, are still slow and unwilling to market rock or other contemporary material to overseas markets and still reliant on permissions from high-ranking cultural officials with little knowledge of the national rock scene.

A similar situation still exists inside the Soviet Union. State record company Melodia recently released its first album by the Aquarium rock group, but the album was recorded and produced by the band itself. Although Melodia has benefited from the record's popularity, no promotional campaign was mounted to boost sales.

Aquarium's enormous reputation here is based on live shows, sporadic radio and television exposure, and on its previous self-released cassette albums, which have been duplicated in tens of thousands throughout the Soviet Union.