

Chalk Circle returns to Maritimes to promote Mending Wall

by Andrew M. Duke

The Chalk Circle LP *Mending Wall* (Duke Street) has been repressed to include "20th Century Boy", formerly available only as a bonus track on the cassette.

Chalk Circle was formed in 1983 in Newcastle, Ontario, by Chris Tait (vocals, guitars), Brad Hopkins (bass, vocals), and Derrick Murphy (drums). Tad Winklarz (keyboards, saxophone), who left Poland to escape martial law, joined later. The band evolved from New Addition, through to The Reactors and D.C. Wyne, settling on Chalk Circle. The name is from Bertolt Brecht's play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and was chosen because they identified with its "what there is belongs to those who are good for it" theme. Along the way they managed to back up such bands as The Waterboys and Aztec Camera.

The album, handled by Chris Wardman (guitarist for the now-defunct Blue Peter), who produced their debut EP, revolves around human relationships. The key song is "N.I.M.B.Y." ("not in my backyard"), which talks of the invisible wall that separates

ghostly progressions and intelligent lyrics

people from each other and themselves using the line "good fences make good neighbours" from Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall". Most of the LP is dedicated to songs that utilize piano, saxophone, and violin, sweeping the listener away with ghostly progressions and intelligent lyrics.

Emphasis has been placed on the harder material, though. "This Mourning", with its "mend the fence" ideology and look at nuclear war, and "20th Century Boy", a T Rex rave-up, have been the singles. "My Artificial Sweetener" (plenty of subtle wit) begins with an eerie synth wail but quickly breaks into another rocker, as does "What Counts", a song that exposes people who prey on the band.

On *Mending Wall*, the best moments come in the form of aching piano, most notably "Who Can Say", not the explosive energy of tracks such as "This Mourning". *Mending Wall* highlights Chalk Circle's incredible talent and should raise them out of the "underrated Canadian band" basement.



A day at the beach with Chalk Circle. Left to right: Tad Winklarz, Chris Tait, Derrick Murphy, and Brad Hopkins.

by Scott Neily

On November 2, Canadian mega-band Rush played a one-night stand at the Metro Centre. Top-notch musicianship was accompanied by a world-class light show and various laser effects. Though there was a good response from Rush's newer hits, the older tunes elicited the most applause. However, the concert turnout was disappointing. Of

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the twenty-thousand-plus signatures on the petition to bring Rush to Halifax, seven thousand fans showed up. The cause may be partially due to the fact that the petition was for all the Maritimes, not just Halifax. If Donald K. Donald Productions had con-

sidered that twenty thousand signatures divided by five shows equals only four thousand tickets sold each, they may not have been left amazed at the poor attendance in Halifax.

I tried to get a short interview with Rush, but found out, much to my chagrin, that the band does not do interviews with university newspapers or radio stations, feeling that they are unnecessary at this point. Since university audiences obviously do not contribute in any great amount to their world-wide success, I settled for a couple of autographs and a well-practiced "Thanks, man" from Geddy Lee. I then took my leave of Squeaky and Co. to find opening group Chalk Circle.

Throughout my sojourn backstage, I had heard comments ranging from "fantastic" to "sleepy" about the group's performance. They played as well as they ever have, but they did seem a little less in touch with the audience than when they played at the Crazy Horse.

Several minutes of intense searching produced my quarry

(they were hiding in a dressing room). After a bit of joking around, I became resolute, stuck a microphone in their collective faces, and demanded they answer a few questions. They became solemn for a couple of seconds and then proceeded to answer with as much seriousness as Eddie Murphy. That ended the idea of an in-depth interview.



PHOTO BY CHRIS HAMILTON

Pied piper returns- Geddy Lee squeaks into a microphone.

As far as I could find out, no major deals went through since the last time I talked to them and they are still only released in Canada. "Hey! We're still plugging away at it. You can't rush these things. They take time." So much for rapid world domination. As far as the tour with Rush goes, "These five dates have been really good. They're heading down to the States after Moncton and there is a chance we'll be able to pick up the rest of the dates in Canada when they come back up, but nothing's really been confirmed."

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I had time to ask them a few other questions and I did, but the answers were a little ambiguous. So I asked why Derrick is not allowed to sing. Replied Brad, "We haven't been able to afford microphone. Actually, he sings fine, but we don't want to hear it. In rehearsals, he sings right along, but playing and singing take a lot of time and practice." no doubt we'll be hearing from Derrick on the next album.

N.I.M.B.Y. is the next single and video

The day following the concert was scheduled to be a video shoot for the band. As I found out later, the video will be the third single off their *Mending Wall* album, "N.I.M.B.Y.". It supposedly was shot in Peggy's Cove so it should be good. Watch for it.

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