

ARTS & CULTURE

Plumtree CD Release with Tigre Benvie

BY JENNIFER BETHUNE

Every one keeps telling me that Rock and Roll in Halifax is dead, dying, on a downward spiral. If that's the case, I have to say that I believe in reincarnation.

In yet another episode of the Thrush Hermit-experience, Tigre

Benvie opened for Plumtree (who, I might add, have yet to die and come back in another form) at the Marquee on Saturday, March 18.

While names, songs and band members come and go, one thing about these reincarnation bands cannot be erased: experience. Tigre Benvie, led by ex-Thrush Hermit

Robb Benvie played a set that flowed like the stories I learned how to write in Grade Five, with a clear beginning, a distinct climax, and a somehow touching denouement.

The set began with an eerie synthesizer number, but quickly moved to controlled, reserved Rock and Roll. About two thirds of the way into the set, the synth player switched to guitar and added the requisite stage antics, which seemed to loosen up the other band members. An emotional denouement ended the set, with Benvie on his knees, cradling his guitar in true Rock and Roll fashion.

Unlike most of Halifax's early-to mid-nineties Rock and Roll scene, Plumtree has remained unchanged, at least in name and make-up. I can't tell you, though, how much they've changed in terms of their sound.

Plumtree has grown up — it's like their voices have changed as they've finally made it though puberty. In high school (circa 1994) Plumtree were offering me breakfast food as a snack (*Have a Banana*), now, with the release of their third, and most recent recording, *This Day Won't Last At All*, they're offering a 10-course feast, complete with booze.



photos by Jenn Bethune

Katriona Sturjon tickles the bass, Amanda Braden and Carla Gillis both flex on guit and add some vox as well while Linette Gillis hits the skins for the band, whose latest effort is handled by Endearing Records, a most able Canadian indie-outfit.

Their appeal is enormous — they are relaxed, but not so relaxed as to come off as flippant, they look great, but not so great that they look like they should be happening in a more cosmopolitan centre than Halifax, but best of all, they sound great. So what more do you want?



photos by Patrick Blackie

BY PATRICK BLACKIE

After fruitlessly scowring the downtown Halifax area for hookers late last Thursday night, I stumbled into the Marquee. It had been a long day, and one way or the other, I was getting some Fur Packed Action.

The St. John's based trio consisting of guitarist/vocalist Jody Richardson, bassist Geoff Youngusband and drummer Barry Newhook came full on with precision, delivering a solid performance that I would describe as post-Alt/Punk with traces of Pop, if I didn't feel 'Pop' to be equivalent to 'shit.'

FPA is in the process of touring for their new CD, *The Dull Thud of Fur*. I was astounded to find a remarkable resemblance between Richardson and Snake from Degraasi, and in premature excitement, began hopefully singing the Zit Remedy's #1 hit. A few more drinks and the dread-locked Youngusband could have easily passed for Wheels, but the fantasy shattered when a few stern looks from Newhook told me that there wasn't a bit of Joey present, and they were not the Zit Remedy.

Having little knowledge of their music, I was impressed by the excess of musical adrenalin. Richardson's mouth was occupied with belting out energetic vocals to the point that I could, and did, throw things into the open space. The flying debris had little effect, however, as Richardson laid down a performance that would definitely bring me back for more.

Youngusband wailed on the bass like a guy who wasn't allowed any caffeine as a kid — lunging around the stage in a flurry of madness, pausing only to holler some back-up in to the mic. He was backed by Newhook's no-nonsense drumming. With skill and sternness, Newhook is probably capable of intimidating most people into enjoying their music with harsh looks alone.

Fur Packed Action may not be the Wild Stallions or the Scorpions, but they rock, and in a most non-heinous way. Halifax needs something to get people moving other than hard drugs, and these guys did the job. The crowd was as enthusiastic about the show as the undoubtedly inebriated band was.

I inadvertently became drunk

at some point in the night and had to leave immediately prior to the band finishing up. As a result I didn't get to talk to them about their Degraasi antics, but they'll be back.

Fur Packed Action will be touring the country this summer in support of their new CD, and will be back at the Marquee on July 16. If you haven't had any action, I strongly suggest you get some. You'll feel a lot better.

(With files from Kathy Reid)



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