

# Skinny Puppy belches into town

**Skinny Puppy and Severed Heads**  
700 Wing, September 12

review by Scott Gordon

I really don't want to say anything about the crowd that showed up at this musical maelstrom, and I will fight myself so that I don't, but unfortunately, the crowd was a major part of the music, and not the other way around, as it should be. Too many 'hair styles' that people had put too much time into; too many fancy clothes that people had

damn the torpedos and record companies. No pretensions here.

When *Skinny Puppy* hit the stage, you could tell that the crowd was waiting with bated breath and panting to see them.

When they cranked up their instruments and got their video show and lights working, I was left wondering if any of them had read Dante's *Inferno*, especially 'Purgatorio.' Dante himself would have loved their show. Dark, dangerous and angry; crude, loud and black, just like their audience, *Skinny Puppy*

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spent too much time picking out to get that 'just right' look: the look of ANGER AND ALL THAT IS DARK. Even Peter Hornach of Severed Heads said, "It's amazing these haircuts . . . that died out in Sydney two years ago."

Enough of that hooha. On the scene, jellybean.

Upon arriving at the 700 Wing, we pulled up into the parking lot and instantly decided to go for a beer or two someplace else because the crowd looked a little bizarre.

Not that we're cowards, but because we just weren't into it without some barley sandwiches under our belts. Off we went, and after trying in vain to find some place at the Edmonton Inn to have a drink, we finally ended up at the Runway 29 Lounge, since Smitty's at Kingsway Mall was closed for much-needed renovations.

After a jug, we ventured back and caught Australia's Severed Heads just as they started their set.

The first thing that one notices about the band is their backdrop, or rather, their video synthesizer projecting Steven Jones' creations. This rather complicated gadget is great. The pictures and computer paintings pulse along with the music as much as the music pulses along with the video.

And their music? In a word; Great! Not the depressing dirges that most electronic 'industrial' bands regurgitate, but music with humour and satire, sometimes excruciatingly biting. As Tom Ellard, the founder of the Sydney-based group, told me later, they do what they want, when they want, and

crawled and belched their way into Edmonton.

I got rather bored with their repetitive songs and funeral dirges and trite posturing and posing. I really got bored with their video show. The showing of World War Two footage and flashing lights, designed, according to them, to set the 'mood' of the song was boring and nothing new. Bands like the Doors, various acid bands, and the Sex Pistols have done the same sort of thing before, and with far better success.

The crowd, however, seemed to like it, even when the fire alarm went off, and various firefighters were wandering around in full gear, trying to find out what was going on.

*Skinny Puppy* didn't stop playing, however, and the 700 Wing didn't burn down, to my knowledge. I was left with a distinctly odd feeling about the entire evening.


I would recommend Severed Heads, but I hope that next time they play here, they will have a full theatre screen for their visuals, as they do elsewhere. They even did a live to air half hour concert on the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the equivalent to the CBC. I wish the CBC would do the same for some of Canada's bands. Hint, hint.

*Skinny Puppy*? Well, I'm still undecided, but I think I'm leaning towards a thumbs up for innovation and some of their songs. A thumbs down for them, however, for their pretensions and posing. Buy their album and decide for yourself. In my case, the jury is still out, and will continue to be until the next time they play here.



Nivek Ogre reaching into dregs and grinds of life.

photo Bruce Gardave

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