

ska and rock n' roll just like peanut butter n' chocolate

by Paul Gazzola

Dave Kennedy, drummer for the ska band King Apparatus is telling a story about ska and beer. The band, says Kennedy, had just finished playing a UofT party when one of the party planners came up and handed the band the customary case of free beer. Fine. Except that it's IPA which isn't exactly the band's favourite beer and whose initials, says Kennedy, stand for "I'll Puke After." When asked about the rather dubious choice of beer, the party planner replied, "Well, ska, IPA, IPA, ska. I thought they went together."

Not according to Kennedy. But

then again, I wouldn't associate ska with the Ramones either, and King Apparatus did do a great loud cover of "Blitzkrieg Bop" during their show last Friday at the Grad Lounge. Not that there was anything particularly ska-ish about their version, but then some people would say there's nothing particularly musical about the Ramones.

King Apparatus is a ska band that likes guitars; they have two, which is more than some rock bands have. Chris Murray, who is also the lead singer, plays ska guitar while Sam Tallo plays lead. Some people might argue that two guitars are too much for a ska band. They should be ignored.

Throughout their show, King Apparatus proved that ska and rock and roll can be just as compatible together as peanut butter and chocolate.

For one thing, the combination made King Apparatus' version of Springsteen's "Fire" a lot more danceable and lively, and Tallo's guitar solo turned a straight-ahead cover of Bob Marley's "Stir It Up" into something off the wall. Then there was a medley that began and ended with The Police's "So Lonely" and included the Beatles' "Let It Be," U2's "With or Without You" and Hall and Oates' "Rich Girl." They also performed a number of originals that were just as good as any of the covers.

Most of them, especially "Made for T.V." and the rambunctious "Five Good Reasons," were better.

stantly for the rest of the show.

Despite having toured across Southern Ontario for over two



KING APPARATUS



Rambunctious is a good word to use to describe the band's performance. It was their ability to work the crowd that propelled Friday's show. Faced with a crowd that seemed reluctant to dance, Murray enticed them onto the dance floor by dancing on it first. Leaving bassist Mitch Girio alone on stage to supply the beat, the rest of King Apparatus put down their instruments and started moving. Even the sound man got into the act, jumping on stage to play Kennedy's vacant drum set. They didn't dance for long but the point was made. There were people dancing almost con-

years, Friday's show was only the second time that King Apparatus had played at York, the first being three days earlier at the Absynthe Pub. It was also the band's fourth show of the week which might not sound that tough, but these guys are working day jobs as well. Murray credits the band's heavier-than-usual workload to their newly acquired booking agent.

King Apparatus is just one of a number of bands that have appeared lately at the Grad Lounge. Tekknakullar Raincoats will play April 6.

the writer's block

by Ira Nayman

"The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflections/The water has no mind to receive their image."

Over the course of this school year, my view of the world and certain events therein has been called into question. Allow me to elaborate on my position.

As I see it, thousands of people starve to death each day, not because we do not have enough food to feed them, but because our socio-political systems won't allow us to get it to them. In this century, tens of millions of real people have died (and continue to die) for abstract ideas of nationalism and racism.

In Canada — civilized, liberal Canada — natives continue to live under inhuman conditions of poverty. One in four users of urban food banks are children under the age of 15. At least one in eight women can expect to be the victim of rape, incest, battery or other sexual abuse in her lifetime (the actual figure may be higher because statistics tend to be underreported). The quality of life in Toronto has noticeably declined, in my lifetime, because of pollution.

To be sure, there are hopeful signs. Individual men are forming groups to explore the limitations of their expected, socialized sex roles. Heightened awareness of the environment is leading to action which may save the entire planet (and, perhaps, even Toronto). Recent well-publicized cases of racism against natives is calling attention to their problems. But, I would be less than honest if I wrote that the small number of people who are working towards solving these and other problems will necessarily save the majority of humanity which is not.

A writer can afford to have ideals; indeed, society expects some sort of positive statement on the human condition from its artists. But, unlike other people, a writer cannot afford to have illusions; one of the main purposes of art is to reveal the reality behind everybody's collective illusions.

Anybody is welcome to disagree with the way I see things, but I have little patience for people who impugn my motives for doing so.

With such a bleak view of

human behaviour, you might expect that I would walk around in a constant state of depression. As a matter of fact, I do not (although I am sometimes described as "quiet").

For one thing, I have my writing in which I can, and frequently do, lose myself. For another, as awful as life sometimes appears, it does offer occasional moments of grace, short periods, usually unexpected, where the good transcends all else. I have had the good fortune of having at least two in the past year.

The most recent occurred just after New Year's. My father told me that I should pursue writing at York and forget about all that silly accounting nonsense. He had done a lot of thinking on the subject and he believed that I should follow my interest rather than what may have appeared to be more lucrative.

I was surprised, to say the least. I've known for a long time that my father wanted one of his sons to take over his accounting firm after his retirement; telling me that it was alright for me not to couldn't have been easy for him (and, I've got to love him for it).

The other moment occurred in the summer, a couple of days after my birthday. The unlikelihood of it still amazes me. Eve, the woman with whose presence I was graced, lives in Windsor; she was in Toronto for a couple of days visiting friends. Her car had broken down on the way out of Toronto, and she left a message on the newly acquired phone answering machine of Shari, a friend of my family. Shari, still trying to figure out how to get messages over the phone from my house, got Eve's, and brought her there.

It was the sort of coincidental chain of events that would bring a howl of protest if it appeared in a novel or film. But, there we were, a bunch of us including Eve and myself, sharing a bite to eat in Kelsey's restaurant while Eve waited to hear if her car was salvageable. We hadn't really said much until I asked her what she was taking in school.

Eve is a writer. We spent the rest of the evening discussing our mutual interest, how we both knew we wanted to write from an early age, the general sorts of things we write (Eve is

a serious writer; I am only if I cannot help it), some of our experiences in the professional world and the kinds of people we had had to deal with. As we got further into the conversation, the rest of the people in the restaurant faded into the dim background; our experiences felt so similar it was, if I may be allowed one poetic digression, like finding a part of your soul you didn't even realize was missing.

I haven't seen her since, although I have written to her and spoken to her over the phone a couple of times. As it happens, I doubt I'll ever see her again. But, I am grateful for the moment.

It's what we all live for.

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