

# Rheostatics charge the Grawood

by Mark Farmer

The Rheostatics walk into the Grawood, tired and bedraggled after what must surely be a long ride from the middle of nowhere. Actually it's only half of the Rheostatics, drummer Dave Clark and guitarist Dave Bidini. Their other half, Martin Tielli and Tim Vesely, is at a CKDU interview.

Dave and Dave definitely look like they could use a cup of coffee and maybe a two-month hiatus. They've been on the road across Canada, including breaks, for about four months now, and as on previous albums, seeing this big old country is food for thought.

"That had a big influence. On *Melville*, a lot of those songs came out of going across the country for sure. The geography of the country, the people had a huge impact on our music. A gigantic impact," says Bidini.

However, Dave and Dave are quick to point out "we're not raving jingoists, but we're certainly not ashamed of where we're from."

Indeed, *Melville* broke the Rheostatics with such odes to Canadiana as *Northern Wish* and *When Winter Comes*, glorifying the little things that make Canadians Canadian. But do they hear the call of that big American market scant miles from their hometown of Toronto? Weeell, sort of...

"I don't know about breaking into America. I'd like to be able to play the Northeast United States and build a crowd there so people will buy our records, so we get a certain sort of passport by our music," says Bidini. "It's kind of a necessary evil, having to go down there and tour. It's so expensive."

"And you play in really dump, small clubs" adds Clark with a sigh. At this point the guys perk up at the promise of a fruit and vegetable plate before the show.

"We've turned into ravenous carnivores on this tour," declares Clark.

I steer conversation onto a question that's puzzled me: what kind of influences these guys have. They may be the most eclectic band I've heard, and that makes pigeon-holing them

tough.

"We don't model ourselves after anyone, really. We're lucky to find our sound, but everyone has had big influences growing up. I was really into the Ramones, Dave was into Jazz, Martin was into Neil Young and Tim was into XTC. But it flares out from there all over the place — tons of different stuff," says Bidini.

Then how come everyone seems to think they sound like Bowie? Maybe it's Martin's sing-song voice or the way their songs wander around the melodies. It could be the "quirky" lyrics, a word I keep hearing used to describe the group.

11:00pm that night...

The Rheostatics take the stage in a packed house. But just beforehand I saw, horrors or horrors, Dave Clark manning the concession stand! All my illusions shattered in a flash. One of my musical heroes, reduced to hawking "Nakedstacs trading cards" at a table in the corner. How disillusioning.

The set goes reasonably well, with a respectable balance of songs from each album. But goshdarnit, why does Martin have to fiddle with the controls on his amp every ten seconds? God knows I love you like a brother, Martin, but STOP SCREWING WITH THE CONTROLS!

The guys made an honest attempt at getting the audience involved, but couldn't quite get the call-and-response thing going. Maybe they shouldn't have separated a room full of drunk people and given them instructions.

Like their last appearance at the Flamingo (guess how long ago that was) they decided to close with *Edmund Fitzgerald*. For those of you who've never heard it done, it's surprisingly light-hearted, but I wish Martin had done one of those superb controlled-feedback solos at the end, such as happened at the Flamingo way back when.

The Rheos aren't known for being encore freaks, but they played an honest, if meandering, medley of the favorites the fans had been screaming for all evening. And with that, once again, the Rheostatics faded into the mist, or at least the dressing room.



Croon-meister Martin Tielli of the Rheostatics.

PHOTO: MIKE GRAHAM

## Dancing towards ecstasy

by James Beddington

The next installment of the dance series at the Dalhousie Arts Centre is a double bill, shared by choreographers Renée Penney and Tammy Forsythe.

**Renée Penney and Tammy Forsythe**  
Dance Performance  
Sir James Dunn Auditorium  
Friday, Nov. 18th

The performance is Friday night in the Sir James Dunn Auditorium. In the first half of the evening Renée is performing three solo pieces, *Cherriova*, *Sylvie Plaza*, and the premiere of *Dreams of a Dead Secretary*. During the latter half of the evening Tammy presents three solos, a duet, and one trio. Both of the choreographers spoke freely (I hope) about their feelings and about the issues they feel are important to them.

Both shunned the uses of labels and stereotypes. They are not "angry



women". It's a misconception that is really old and the people willing to listen have already lent their attention. They go beyond feminism, and what ever you are expecting of their performance it is probably wrong. I'm not sure I can call what they do "dance", "modern dance" or "performance art". Maybe even theatre. It fits no stereotypes and it defies them all. Renée performs solid text along with the more physical aspects of performance. Her work centres around blowing sexual taboos up and examining them under a microscope. The vehicle of this is always comedy.

Tammy's use of text is more sparse and she uses a lot of aggressive movement. The themes in her work are authority, sexuality, beauty, and expressing feeling through movement. Tammy uses the music of Fugazi, Bliss and Trenchmouth in her work. I have no real idea about what will happen on Friday. I do know that I will be there to find out and anyone who isn't is going to miss something.

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