

Kiss this, baby!

MUSIC

Black Diamond

Oasis Bar and Grill,
November 29th.

The Oasis was as packed as it could be last Friday night for Black Diamond, the ultimate tribute to the legendary band Kiss. People of all ages squeezed in to hear some of those 70s sing-along party anthems. One has to wonder where all of these leftover rockers come from.

It was hot, sweaty, loud, and I could feel my brain cells popping from all of the smoke — ah, the joy of rock and roll! With a bang of pyrotechnics Black Diamond hit the stage for a long set, beginning with "Deuce". Dressed in full make-up and costume, including those high boots from the Love Gun days, the look-alike Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley, and Peter Criss gave it their best.

The crowd was freaking out, singing along to every song — some even playing air guitar off in the corners. For Halifax this was a very unusual show with explosions, shooting flames, guitars that smoked (literally) and a huge flashing Kiss banner. Gene Simmons acted the demon while playing bass, and yes, he blew fire and drooled blood, to the roaring approval from the crowd. Paul Stanley moved his hips and legs through a seemingly impossible range of motion keeping his eye on all the girls in the front row, including a woman dancing on a chair who unbuttoned her blouse. Meanwhile, Ace Frehley wrestled with his guitar as he lurched in and out of solos. Poor Peter Criss just sat at the back beating his drums, but did an excellent solo during "100,000 Years".

They played many hits from the original Kiss like "Detroit Rock City", "Calling Dr. Love", "Parasite", "Do You Love Me", and "Shout it out Loud". They also played one of my personal favorites, "2,000 Man". And there wasn't a single person in the Oasis who wasn't singing along to



"Rock and Roll All Nite" when Paul Stanley urged everyone to help out.

The band ended the night playing "Black Diamond" after which some fans climbed up on stage to shake hands with the band members.

For many of us here in Halifax, this is the closest that we will get to seeing Kiss. But as I watched Black Diamond, I sometimes forgot that I was watching a cover band. Some might say that the show was incredibly cheesy, cliched, and out-of-date, but there wasn't a single person who left without having a highly enjoyable time.

STUART MCMILLAN



BY TIM COVERT

You can't get any more Irish than The Mahones' Fintan McConnell.

Born in Dublin, McConnell moved with his family to Kingston, Ontario. His father speaks Gaelic and has owned several Irish pubs over the years that featured many of the big names in Irish music. His mother is the president of the Worldwide Irish Club — that's not the club's real name, but the name is Gaelic and McConnell can't even spell it.

The Mahones were in town last weekend to play a show at Birdland in support of their second album, *Rise Again*.

Formed on St. Patrick's Day in 1990, the Mahones have built a reputation on high energy "celtic punk" shows. Their last album, 1994's *Draggin' the Days*, was a fantastic success and they toured two and a half years on that record.

"You have to tour your ass off to build a foundation," says McConnell of the marathon road trip. "This time it will be much shorter between albums."

The singer/guitarist for the Mahones says that while *Draggin' the Days* was more of a celtic punk album, *Rise Again* has a broader feel. Rollicking tunes like "Paint the Town Red" and "Down the Boozer" are in the minority on the album.

"It's the phases you go through," says McConnell. "One minute you're into the celtic thing, the next..."

Over the last few years, celtic music has been more in the public eye, with the overwhelming crossover success of artists like Ashley MacIsaac, Great Big Sea, and the Rankin Family. McConnell says that the music has always been there, especially for him, and that it was just a couple of years ago that the mainstream media picked up on it.

"Now there's celtic overflow. The good stuff gets covered up by the bad stuff," comments McConnell.

Another mistake the media has made is in assuming that celtic music is limited to the East Coast. Given that the Irish and Scottish settled across Canada, it makes sense that McConnell is a little perturbed by that impression.

"Across Canada, there's the impression that the East Coast is the main thing, but it's not true. [Celtic music is] everywhere."

Recently, the Mahones performed the title song for the movie *Celtic Pride*, starring their fellow Kingstonian, Dan Aykroyd. A friend of the Mahones, who is Aykroyd's personal assistant, suggested to the movie's producers that the band contribute some songs from *Draggin' the Days* to the movie's soundtrack. While that idea was eventually dropped, the friend got the Mahones to bang out a song around some lyrics he had written about the movie. The producers loved the song, and now it's the only celtic tune in *Celtic Pride*.

McConnell says there's not a lot of money to be made in celtic music, but that being part of a celtic band has its advantages.

"The money's not that good," he says, "but we love to play and we love the people."

McConnell also admits that you can always make a living and you always have a fan base, even though your audience is constantly changing.

The Mahones' name comes from the Gaelic phrase "pog mo thoin", which means "Kiss my arse". This was the Pogues' original name, but that successful Irish group dropped the "mo thoin" part. McConnell says that at the time the Mahones formed, they didn't care about a name, and picked the Mahones for fun. He says the only people who usually bring it up are the media.

"If I'd have known we'd have been doing this seven years later, I might have picked a different name," admits McConnell.

However, the band likes the instant association of the name with a celtic flavour. Also, the Mahones sounds a lot like the Ramones. The band pick similar stage names — on stage McConnell is Fintan Mahone.

Sounds just about right for a bunch of celtic punks.

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