

# Skydiggers concert doesn't check out

by Leigha White

Josh had an agenda. In the dark, lonely McInnes room, as crewfolk scammed about tuning, adjusting, lifting and moving, the Skydiggers' guitarist was quite secure in the knowledge that he would communicate his agenda. Whatever it was... I'm still not sure.

**CONCERT REVIEW**  
**Skydiggers**  
**McInnes Room**  
**Dalhousie SUB**  
**Saturday, September 24**

The press packet I had received was but scant snippets of fact bathed in bullpucky, the dance of the publicist committed to Xerox. "Skydiggers? An acoustic folk rock band with a gospel feel!" it told me. "Skydiggers? A gaining force in the Canadian market!" it told me. The dance of the publicist, rife with words, tells of NOTHING.

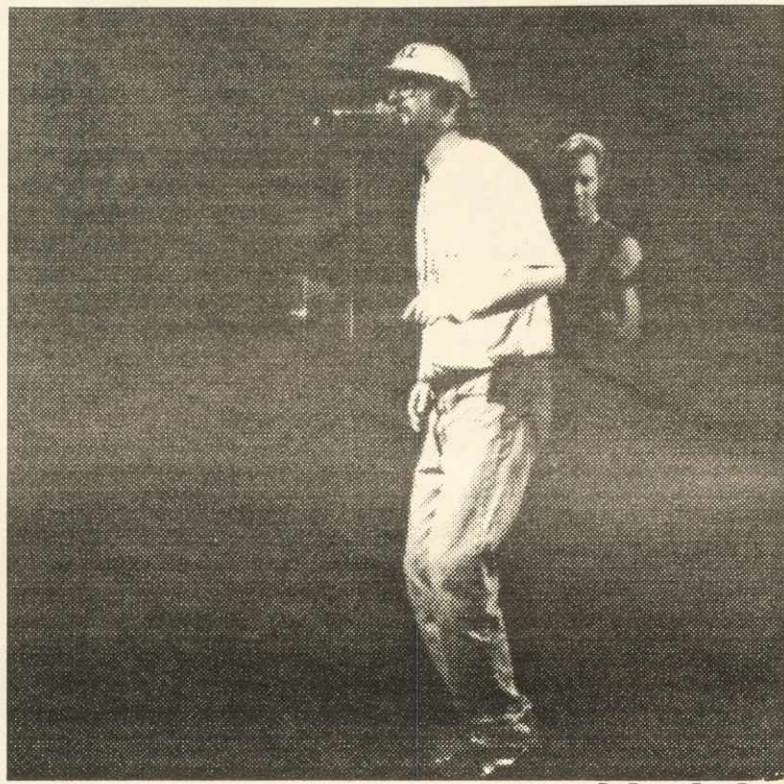
The compact disc I had received was a reasonably mainstream, prosaic country variation; I found nothing special to ask questions of there. 'Twas dull in my mind; an AOR radio festival, cowboy hats sailing the seas of the

rising Ontario surge. No Moxy Fruvous, no Barenaked Ladies. (The Skydiggers had toured to some extent with the Ladies, and the contrast was none too murky — they prefer not to have the Ladies' household appeal, and they do not seek the starlight spots.)

So I chatted with Josh for a while, learning nearly nothing save this: a transition from vocal focus to instrument focus had been made, and some level of creative control had been maintained as they produced themselves this time. To him, it meant fighting the waves of subjectivity, in order to better create. To me, it seemed an excuse not to take chances.

The band was in the midst of soundcheck. I felt as though the McInnes room had become a karaoke hall; was it "Pull Me Down" I heard them replay, note for note and twang for twang, Memorex turned live? I was chilled. To the very bone, I was frozen in time, seeing my small bubble CD player, seeing the host of Puttin' On The Hits rating the Skydiggers on originality, appearance and lip sync. They played in truth, and they sang in truth, but they did not break from the tape.

So I waited about. I scanned the SUB for posters. They were covered up. I watched Star Trek with the staff.



DALPHOTO: PETE ROSS

When finally, at 9 pm or so, the audience began to trickle in (there was no lineup to speak of), I chatted a few of them up: many were ardent fans of the Skydiggers. Few had heard of the concert well in advance. All felt the con-

cert was improperly promoted. The great press machine, so eloquent in its bullshit, had failed to reach the masses.

I meandered up to the McInnes room again. The bar was being set up. There was beer as far as the eyes could

see. I wondered to myself, eef eet's not ice brewed, do people care? How many were coming for drink over music?

Folk filed in. It took what seemed like hours before the room was even half-filled. The opening band played a set or two; catchy but unmemorable. Country-styled fennel line-danced across the floor. I reeled from the noise, the smell of the beer, the stale nacho boats, and the screams of the vocalist. Cowboy boots and cigarette smoke. Oh, my achy breaky head.

The publicity machine in my head began to rust. I longed for substance, longed for feeling. The beer disturbed me (I am very uncomfortable around alcohol in general). The lights were too dim. The music bored me so. Music for the sake of music, Josh? Desperation took me.

So, as the Skydiggers themselves set up for their act, I quietly slipped out and headed for the office to write letters. It was blessed relief. Perhaps they themselves performed well that night; I could not say. But, as I wake from the disillusionment of pre-concert press fluff, I slowly realize that Josh's only sensible comment makes for more sense than I thought Saturday evening:

"The business is half bullshit."

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