



ARTS & CULTURE

THE GREAT BOWLING BOOTY

A mindless rant by a counter-bitch

*Everybody go bowling tonight,
everybody wang chung tonight*

BY PHIL "THE PIN
MONKEY" LEWIS

When was the last time you've worn shoes that were used by thousands of other people?

The bowling alley is a mecca of stinky feet and over-weight athletes. Bowling attracts all kinds of people because it is competitive, cheap and easy. It is the egalitarian's sport.

The sport can be rather competitive when you practice enough to enter the big leagues. After several years of league bowling I have just recently joined the mixed pro league. *The Daily News* prints the names of the top bowlers from the pro leagues each week. I was fortunate enough to be at the top of my game in only my first week in the league! Needless to say, I'm pretty popular with the guys and ladies in the bar.

The stereotypical bowler is a white male in his thirties trying to cling to his childhood by playing the only sport that won't put him in traction. These bowlers are not as common as believed, but they do exist. All of the leagues have at least a few members that take the sport far too seriously.

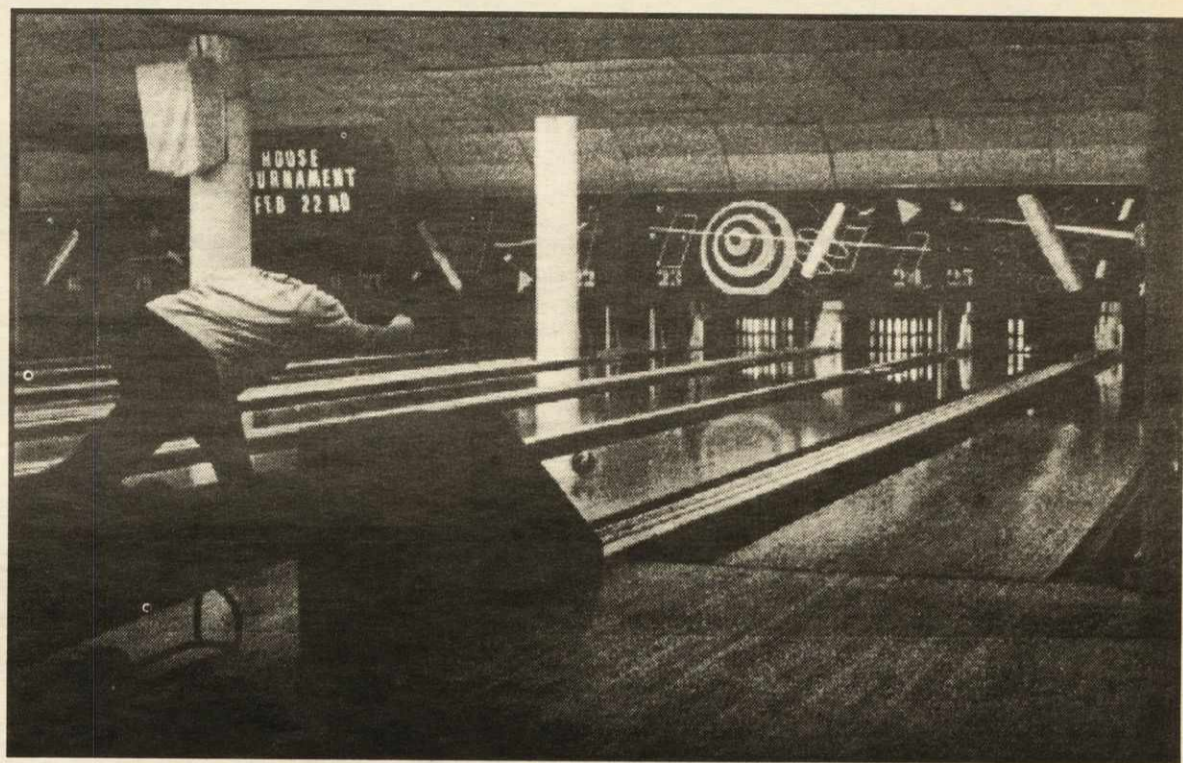
It is no coincidence that many

of the bowlers in the pro leagues have at one point or another worked at a bowling alley or spent a lot of time at one. This is a sport for true athletes. It takes skills that have to be honed and refined with hours and hours of practice.

Obviously, it is just a matter of time before the sport enters the Olympics. On the other hand, people bow in the summer as well as the winter. Therefore, the only problem is that the International Olympic Committee is just having a hard time deciding which Olympics to introduce it to. Honest.

The bowling alley is a prime spot for those looking for a good job. While the pay is comparable to Nike workers in Indonesia, it is a job with low stress and a lot of fun. After three long years I am on the verge of being promoted from the position commonly referred to as "counter-bitch". The next step is the prestigious position of mechanic. Currently, I am somewhere in between, where I have the workload of the mechanic but the title and pay of the "counter-bitch". I like to refer to myself as a "mechana-bitch".

A wide variety of clientele frequent bowling alleys. Among these are families looking for some



BOWLING: good fun for the whole family. (Photo by Ryan Lash).

quality time. It is one of the few sports that can be done inexpensively as a quality family event. The bowling alley is a popular spot for kids' birthday parties.

Common customers are VLT players that can be seen at any licensed establishment. Without these patrons many of the local bowling alleys would not be able to stay open during the summer

months. On the other hand, there are some VLT players that play tiny, insignificant bets from open to close, for no other reason than to piss the staff off.

Bowling alleys are commonly used as places to take dates. Why take a hot date to the movies when you can take her to the alley? This past week I witnessed many guys showing off for their girlfriends by making that all impressive strike,

just so they could grope them afterwards.

Some customers fall under the headline from the movie *Clerks*: "Just because we serve doesn't mean we like you." However, I am probably just venting and should get a good haircut and get a real job. I highly recommend that everyone visit their local alley and enjoy the euphoria that is the bowling experience.

Bowling in Vegas

Leaguers dream of candlepin glitterati and warm embraces

BY GREG MCFARLANE

There are places in this world where mere mortals should not go, lines that should not be crossed. On Sunday night I had the dubious honour of accompanying a photographer into a bowling alley loaded with leaguers ready to show off their *King Pin* bravado. Woody Harrelson would be proud.

But underneath the seamy layers of spandex and polyester stood men and women poised before the foul line, cautious not to lob the ball. They were standing in a dingy rut in Halifax, their feet endangered by shoes worn by God-knows-who else. It was frightful.

But in their minds they were in Vegas, and Elvis was watching from the front row. The bowling world championships were on the line, and they had the hopes of every trucker living east of Moncton riding on their backs.

One man, whom we will call "Ed", stood before the lane, looking down at the great candlepins. He knew his next shot was big, and he was beginning to crack under the pressure. Sweat was running down

his neck, and coupled with his polyester shirt, was making him itchy. He reached around his back and scratched the itch away, all the while focussing intently on his goal.

With a final breath Ed stepped towards the foul line, lunged forward, and brought the ball up above his left shoulder. In one thunderous action he swiftly brought the ball down, sending it towards the pins. The power in his follow-through nearly knocked him off his feet.

He stood, watching the ball curve its way down the lane. The spin that Ed forced on the ball brought it dangerously close to the left gutter, the bane of this grand ol' game. Ed writhed his body to the right, as if trying to lead the ball with him. The ball complied, and the embedded and glazed over silver sequins inside of it let off a shining glimmer as it proceeded towards the centre-pin.

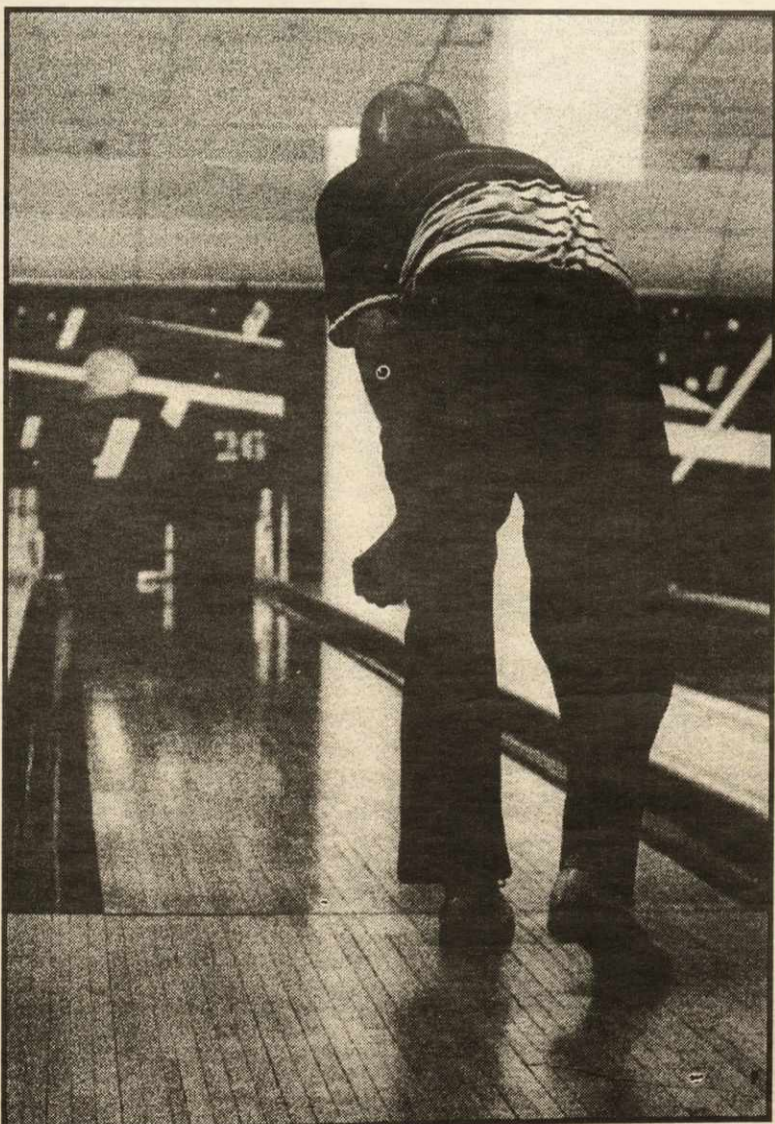
The audience stood in silence. The only noises one could detect in this shrine were the sounds of Ed's ball rolling down the hardwood lane and the sound of a VLT machine paying out in the background.

Everyone in the place knew what was on the line. If Ed nailed a strike here, he would be champion of the world. Everyone knows the clout that champion bowlers have. Free games wherever you go, free truck rides from riggers, an endorsement deal for those little wrist braces. Yep, that's the good life.

The world was watching like we all watched Brendan Shanahan face Dominik Hasek in that fateful hockey shootout at the Olympics. But this wasn't hockey — this was *bowling*.

Some held their breath. Some covered their eyes. Some buried their heads in their laps. Not Ed, though. He stared at those pins like they were the demons inside him. The ball crashed through, sending all ten pins flying in the air. A yelp of elation escaped Ed, and the whole place went berserk. Wayne Newton ran on to the floor, embraced Ed and squealed in his ear. Confetti was flying, little kids were jumping up and down, and the noise level caused damage to my ear drums that still remains today.

No, bowling is not just a pastime, but a way of life.



Ed twists his hips to the left, urging the last pin down. Wayne Newton soon jumped up and gave him a giant hug. (Photo by Ryan Lash)