

# ARTS & CULTURE

## Symphony for the freaks: the Rome Plows

BY AARON DHIR

In the January 16th, 1997 edition of the Gazette, I reviewed the eponymous debut of Halifax's Rome Plows, and described it as "... simply staggering ... demand[ing] the listener's attention from the first few chords." The band, which includes Mike Bégin (guitar, bass, vocals), Lenny Bowles (bass, guitar, vocals), and Andy Miller (drums, vocals), will be performing at Reflections Cabaret, on September 26th, as part of the Halifax On Music Festival. The following is the substance of my conversation with both Mike and Lenny.

**Gaz:** Since the band's formation in 1995, you've gained quite a bit of touring experience. What's the general feeling towards your shows, and have the audiences been receptive?

**Lenny:** We played in Truro with the State Champs. I guess you weren't there for that one.

**Gaz:** How was it?

**Mike:** There were four people there, outside of our friends.

**Gaz:** I apologize on behalf of Truro. How have other places been?

**Mike:** The responses have been great, especially in places like London...the people who are around, either during the opening slot or late at night when we play, have been really excited...and gradually the shows have been getting bigger.

**Gaz:** The CD achieves a high level of intensity, and has a relatively clean sound that doesn't

overly rely on amp distortion. In light of this, how do you feel about people often comparing you to the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, especially when their last CD [Now I Got Worry] seemed a bit more abrasive, whereas your new stuff seems to incorporate more traditional bluesy guitar parts, and clean jazzy rhythms?

**Lenny:** Well, I'm sure that part of it is because we're both trios, but for me it's like being compared to the Beatles, and that can't be bad. I'd rather be compared to Jon Spencer.

**Mike:** With Jon Spencer you've kinda' got trashy blues rock, and with us you hear that country twang, and I think it's an immediate connection that people make...plus, they're the hippest band that people can grab out of a bag of bands.

**Gaz:** I do find it strange when people describe your music as "original". Is it more accurate to say that the band does appropriate material, but then de-constructs it and provides a fresh interpretation?

**Lenny:** Yeah, well there's no such thing as originality...as long as you steal from good people, I

think you're alright (laughter).

**Mike:** In the end, I think that the newer stuff that we're doing...well, I can't think of anyone else who's putting trip-hop drum beats with big, loud rock guitar, and spaghetti-western style parts. To me it seems pretty new, and I'm excited about it.

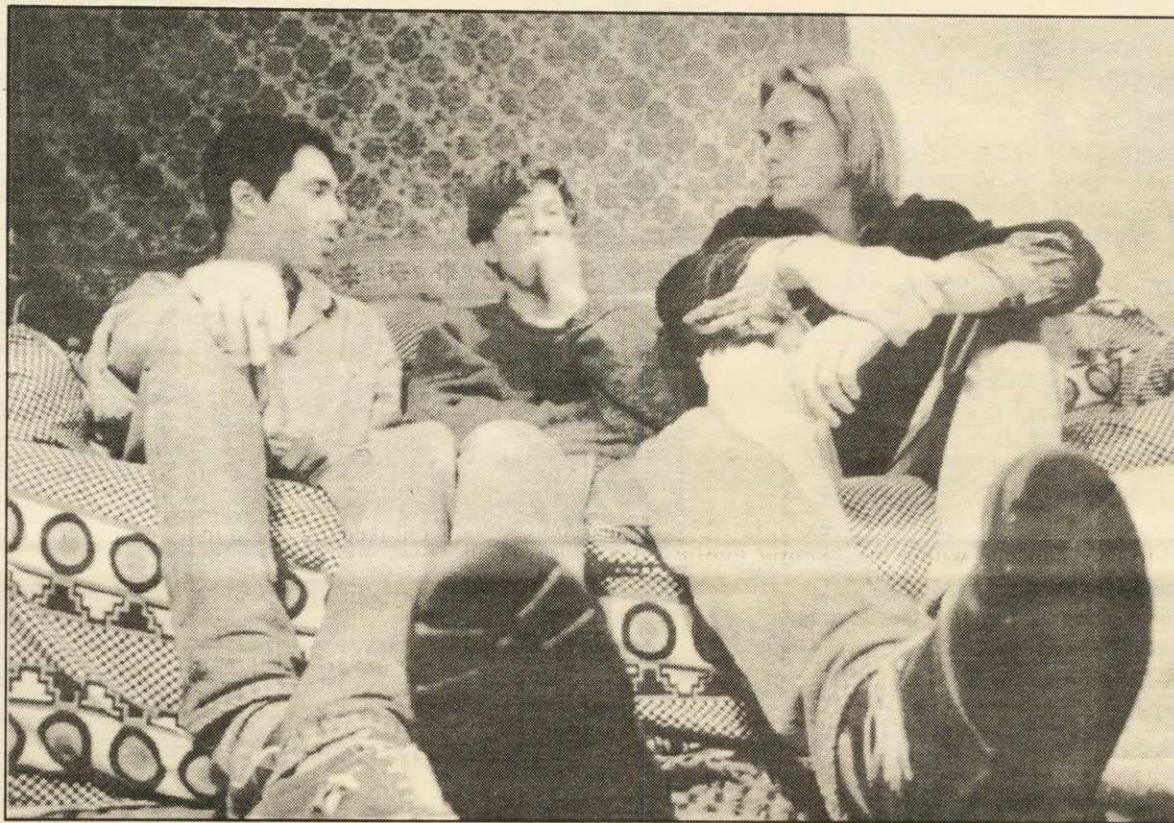
**Gaz:** While not to take away from the band's technical proficiency, do you think it's possible that your local appeal has been enhanced by the fact that so much of what has become known from Halifax is generic, pop music,

while your sound is so different?

**Mike:** Yeah, totally. There's no trick about it—there are a lot of pop bands here, and because of the popularity of bands like Jale and Sloan, a lot of kids have been inspired to start bands. So now there are a lot of green bands trying to emulate the bands they've been listening to, and if you come out with something that sounds different, it's going to show.

**Lenny:** I mean, we went through that too, but we've each been playing individually for 15 years,

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Rome Plows. Photo provided by the band.

## Halifax turns on the music

BY MELISSA BUOTE

The hype has been building for a year. The posters have been up for months. From September 26-28, Halifax On Music will be back.

Accompanying three days of seemingly unhindered musical exposition, will be an abundance of other events.

The Rock and Roll Carnival and Comic Book Jam will once again

hit the stage at Wormwood's Cinema, and Dalhousie's own CKDU will be cavorting with the participants in the form of radio shows from 1-2 p.m., starting on Tuesday before Halifax On Music begins, and concurrently ending the festival on Sunday.

Neko Case, The Inbreds, Number One Cup and Ladybug Transistor have all signed on to

dominate the airwaves.

The festival involves three headliners a night, each one possibly swimming in ambiguity in the eyes of an untrained music fan. One must be informed of who's who and what's what to choose which shows to see.

The acts range from country, lo-fi, feedback-infused pop, blues-influenced rock, to sparsely backed

solo musicians.

Some acts to check out: Elevator to Hell have been local favourites for years. The Moncton-based band's approach to lo-fi soundscapes allows for a break between the pop bands that dominate Eastern Canada.

Straight out of Memphis, the Grifters make it hard for any writer to deconstruct their music. Called everything from blues, to rock, to noise, the Grifters have persevered to craft their own style and a sonic resemblance to no one.

And Finally, Yo La Tengo. For over a decade they have entranced the masses with their organ-soaked droning and humming. From the hiss of waves upon waves of feedback, to the slice of a clean chord, Yo La Tengo are nothing less than hypnotic.

Other headliners include Ron Sexsmith, Neko Case, and Pansy Division (who played at the last Halifax Pop Explosion).

And so, with a rough outline of what these bands have to offer, make sure to venture out to Cafe Olé, the Blues Corner, Reflections Cabaret or the Lord Nelson Ballroom to see what the fuss is about. (see photo on page 15.)

## Award winner shares Wives' Tales

Brian Moore

Lord Nelson Hotel, Monday,  
September 8

BY NEIL FRASER

The room was packed as people came to celebrate National Literacy Day by hearing Brian Moore read from his new book, *The Magician's Wife*. The writer of *Black Robe* and winner of several awards — including two Governor General awards — started off a fall series of readings, sponsored by Frog Hollow Books. Other authors to be included in this series are Susan Urquhart, Carol Shields, and David Suzuki.

*The Magician's Wife*, due out on

Canadian shelves in January, concerns a French magician sent to Algeria by the French government.

The government is worried about Arab spiritual leaders who stir up trouble, making the people rally around them and their supernatural powers. So the French counter-act by sending over their own magician to show them that they are more powerful, and to scare them into submission.

The story, like Moore's other novels, is based partly on historical fact, and partly on imagination. The French government really did send a magician to Algeria to help in the war effort — the novel is set in a time when magic still meant something, and producing a rabbit

from a hat was akin to parting a sea.

The story is told from the magician's wife's point of view, hence the title. Moore said that he wanted to write from the woman's point of view because the man was "boring and arrogant," and because he had not written from a woman's point of view in a while. She begins as a young, shy girl, and the novel follows her development into a more confident and mature adult.

As the novelist took the podium, I was a little disappointed. One expects the literary greats to be larger than life, but the man standing in front of the audience was a timid-looking man with a grandfatherly appearance. He gave

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## Live in Halifax

In upcoming issues of the Gazette, we here in the Arts and Culture section will be providing you, our reader, with a listing of various events taking place in Halifax. Expect a more varied listing, including films, art galleries, and theatre productions. It's just our way of helping you get more culture for your money. The following are this week's live music listings.

**The Blues Corner:** 18th: Burnt Black (w Adrenalin); 19th: Big City Blues; 20th: Paul Ryan's Opera Blues Jam (matinee); Big City Blues; 22nd: Three of a Kind; 23rd: Open Mic Night (w Dave Carmichael); 24th: DJ Dance Party (w Marc Willet and Andy Haigh). **Cafe Ole:** 18th: DJ Loonie Toonz; 19th: Soup, Pack Rat, Angelicatree, Slant VI (benefit for Metro Food Bank); 20th: Dry Leaf, Carmines, Hope, Conformist Party. Cheers: 18th—20th: Dutch Robinson; 23rd—27th: Almost Brothers. **JJ Rossy's:** 18th: Mother's Cry. **Lower Deck:** 18th—21st: Clam Chowder. **Market Street Jazz Cafe:** 18th: Derrick LeLacheur Trio; 19th: Spectre Rays. **New Palace:** 18th—21st: Pedestrian. **Peddler's Pub:** 20th: Kenny & Alex and the Swell Guys. **Reflections Cabaret:** 18th: Hu Noo; 21st: "A Teenager No More" - Brandy Michael's 20th Anniversary Drag Show; 24th: Atlantic Film Festival. **Seahorse Tavern:** 23rd: Soup. **The Tickle Trunk:** 18th: Rasta Gumbo; 19th: Big Fish; 20th: Mir; 21st: Dale Lechter; 22nd: PF Station; 23rd: Open Mic Night; 24th: R.A.F.A. (Rock Artists For Artists). **Your Father's Moustache:** 20th: Joe Murphy and the Water Street Blues Band (matinee).

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