

# Never a dull moment with Highland Heights

BY KAREN PARKER

Ceilidh-seekers who attended Highland Heights' shows last week at the Marquee Club or the Grawood received quite a surprise. The Halifax-based group (all originally from Cape Breton) are well known for their first CD of east coast and celtic standards, as well as for their appearances at traditional music venues such as the Lower Deck. However, on this occasion, they showcased a fresh sound: strong, original, rootsy rock music.

During Thursday night's CD release at the Marquee, the band joked that the reason their new album, *Never a Dull Moment*, is not very "celtic" is so people will stop calling vocalist Norma MacDonald "Bonnie Jean" or "Cookie". In truth though, the band would much rather perform original material.

"You really get to a point where you have to stop doing all this traditional music," says vocalist Norma MacDonald.

"To be playing every night you

really have to like what you're doing. Writing our own stuff is more rewarding," adds pianist/vocalist Rob Lorway.

With eight originals and three covers on their new CD, it's quite a departure from the band's first album.

"We were told that we needed to put certain traditional songs on [our first CD] or else people wouldn't be interested in buying it," says Lorway.

*Never a Dull Moment*, which was recorded at Idea of East Recording in Halifax (the same place Sloan's *One Chord to Another* was recorded), is a reflection of Highland Heights' new confidence in their own songwriting abilities.

And that confidence is well founded. *Never a Dull Moment* is an impressive sophomore effort, with the four core band members sharing song-writing and vocal duties. There are several standout tracks, including the alternative-rock inspired song "I'm Not Sorry", and the very catchy "This Time", which includes a funky

trumpet in its arrangement. The band's instrumental and vocal talents are also obvious on the slower-paced songs, such as MacDonald's jazzy cover of "Perfect".

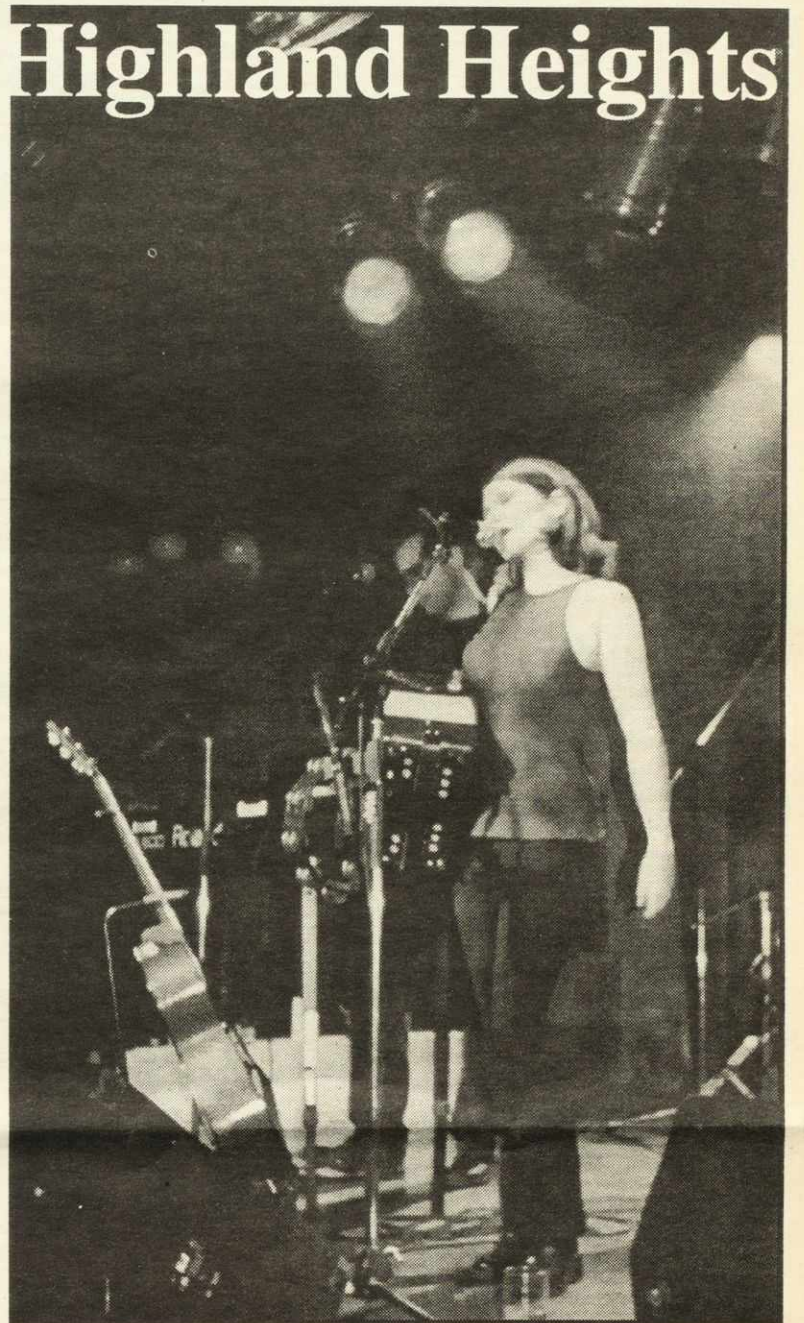
If all goes well, Highland Heights hope they might even be able to produce a video for one of the songs from the album.

"Funding is hard to come by, but we're really hoping that we can [cut a video]," says MacDonald. "It depends on how well this first single goes."

Highland Heights recently returned from a well received two-week tour, and the band is hoping that bigger things will keep coming their way.

"We're going to make a movie about our lives," jokes MacDonald. "Kate Winslet is going to be me."

Honestly, though, the band says that right now their main goal is to promote the new album, and in September they plan to tour across Canada for the first time ever.



Highland heights rocks the Marquee. (Photo by Diane Cane)

## Clerks, comic vision assembled by slackers

BY PHIL E. LEWIS

The cult movie *Clerks* was based on a pair of clerks who worked at convenience and video stores. The movie focused on their complete disregard for their customers and feelings of superiority over those who entered their kingdom. Recently, a comic book has begun publication based on the movie. Unlike other movie-based comics, *Clerks* is penned by the writer of the original movie, Kevin Smith.

Smith has created a comic book that has all the elements of the movie, but is lacking in the story department. Only the first issue has been released, so it is likely that he needs time to get his feet under him in this foreign medium.

The first issue revolves around the video guy's get-rich-quick scheme — getting into the rare *Star Wars* toy market. From the

perspective of a *Star Wars* fan, I did find some moments of humour but the storyline was drawn out and farfetched. The

worshipped for being in possession of figures such as the "Leia porked Ewok".

The characters remain true to those in the movie, but they don't transfer well between mediums. I can only take so much of Smith's incessant addiction to drawn out captions which read more like rants rather than dialogue.

Jim Mahfood's alternative drawing style does seem appropriate for the magazine. It is not a very clean and sharp style but it captures the characters' quirkiness and a broad range of emotions. The comic is in black and white, which is consistent with the lack of color in the film.

It is obviously the movie that is drawing the comic's readers, but without a well written first issue, those readers will not last. The comic book market has such a glut of product that readers are very discriminate and

unforgiving. I hope Smith is committed to improving his craft, 'cause without a stronger effort this book is headed for certain death.

VIEW ASKEW PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# Clerks.

(The Comic Book)

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clerks received their figures from a toy store clerk. The toy store clerk auctions them to the highest bidder after work, and is

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