

RAFA provides a voice for local musicians

BY AMBER MACARTHUR

The surprise of the Nova Scotia Music Week in Halifax was the overwhelming presence of Rock Artists For Artists showcases and events. Over a five night span, 25 Rock Artists For Artists (RAFA) member bands performed across the city and hosted two excellent seminars at the World Trade and Convention Centre on Saturday.

The entertainment began Wednesday evening "Unplugged" at the Tickle Trunk. Thursday night's bands played at the New Palace and Friday night's venue was the Oasis.

Two of the most interesting events of the week were Saturday's RAFA seminars on song critiquing and one on "Promoting Nova Scotian Pop/Rock". The latter seminar featured David DeWolfe from Music East Magazine, Mike Campbell from Much Music and many other well known names in the music industry. This seminar was organized exclusively by RAFA as an open forum with question and answer segments. A better panel of experts could not have been found.

Questions from local artists were raised at the seminar and the panel spoke candidly with artists. Dewolfe told the audience that the media "has to have credibility when [they] expose an artist" and all the panellists spoke about the "buzz" that artists must create to be successful in the business.

On Saturday night six local bands fought for that "buzz" playing original music again at The Oasis. Sunday night pulled the

whole week together with a RAFA Finale at Cheers with 13 bands performing all types of music.

Twenty-five bands in the various showcases was the maximum number they could possibly handle over a five night span, said RAFA representative Robert Holden. The week started out with only a few bands, but Holden said they added more to "help as many artists [as possible] get a foothold in the industry".

RAFA is a non-profit association which supports, promotes and educates local artists who perform and write original music. Holden helped put together this past week's events in the hope of getting "the best exposure for these bands" and giving Halifax "something for everyone".

The difference between RAFA and other associations involved in the Nova Scotia Music Week is that all of RAFA's members are from the

Halifax area. There are 107 members, including producers and technicians, who must get involved and help out with RAFA events. When you take into account that only one member of a band is required to register with RAFA, you are really looking at a small community of musicians with upwards of 350 people actively participating in the association. The members are not limited to only rock bands, but perform every type

of music from the band Wooderson's acoustic melodies, to the hard rock of the Knucklebones.

According to Holden, RAFA "wants to expand to include other Atlantic provinces", as it is now only Nova Scotia based. But for now RAFA will continue to support local talent, organizing showcases once a month at the New Palace, and producing a quarterly newsletter as an important voice for local musicians.



Photo by Ryan Lash

Flora and Fauna at Cafe Olé

Saturday evening started out with a trip down to the Bike Shop Cafe on Gottingen street, where there was a pre-show cocktail party. With free food and cheap beer, what more could you ask for? I met the girls in the band, who were friendly enough, although they couldn't think of any

quotes to give me.

After the cocktail party, it was off to Cafe Olé for the Plumtree show. I arrived there in time to see the last few songs of Starbeam's set, but I didn't see enough to give an adequate review.

Plumtree then took the stage. The crowd was into it right from the start. Things got pretty wild towards the middle of the set, people were into it full swing. I never thought I'd see crowd surfing at a Plumtree show, but sure enough, there it was.

I think that the reason everyone was so wild was because they were geared up for the Pansy Division show.

For their encore, the girls did a cover of "I Love Rock and Roll". That one really got the crowd going. Amanda Braden even got a little help singing from the crowd, courtesy of a guy jumping on stage and taking

to the mic.

Just when I thought things couldn't get any more out of hand, Pansy Division took the stage. This was the cue for everyone to go completely nuts. I wound up taking shelter from the contained riot backstage with Plumtree. I guess the best way to describe the show was *crowd energy*.

Pansy Division played the crowd really well. They sort of fed off of one another. I'm not sure, but I think at one point, the bass player hiked up his dress and flashed Barrington Street.

All in all, both bands put on a great show (I'm not trying to exclude Shyne Factory, The Holiday Snaps, and Starbeam, but I didn't get there early enough to see them), and I'm looking forward to next year. On a personal note, I'd like to thank the girls from Plumtree, who endured my presence all weekend.

STEVE PETRIE

Sex concert

Ron Sexsmith, Cool Blue Halo, The Deadly Snakes
Mike Ireland and Holler, Admiral

This is the second year for the Halifax On Music Festival, and the first year for the Blues Corner to participate as a venue. It was a nice relaxed atmosphere and the lineup for the night seemed to reflect that.

Admiral, from Toronto, warmed up the early evening crowd with some solid rocking pop songs. Bassist Paul Querengesser was pretty good, but overall the sound was pretty average. Enjoyable, but nothing to get excited about.

Mike Ireland and Holler were up next, and I do not know what to say about this band. I have never reviewed a country band before. I can not confess to being a big fan of the music, but I knew that if I was to have a good time I must overcome my prejudices and take it for what it was. Somehow, part way through the set, I found myself tapping my foot to the simple rhythm and losing myself to the crooning southern drawl of

Mike Ireland. Their approach to country is more classic and closer to the blues roots, not like the modern kind that is more closely related to classic rock. Mike Ireland sings from the heart, and that is what matters more than musical genre.

Rock and roll can never die, and that is the spirit that The Deadly Snakes embody. Speaking of classic rock, that seems to be what this six-piece was born and bred on. Also hailing from Toronto, the band put on a highly charged show that forced the audience to pay attention. With two horn players and a keyboardist, this band definitely needs a bigger stage. And they have the attitude and adrenaline to do it.

Local popsters Cool Blue Halo were up next, and were a nice segue from the high energy of the Deadly

a bigger stage to be fully appreciated, Ron Sexsmith is more suited to the smaller venues. But a talent like his cannot stay bottled up for much longer, and soon he will just be a speck on a stage, so I am glad for the opportunity to see him at this level. Loved by critics, it is only a matter of time before he catches on.

As a poet armed with an acoustic guitar, he could probably keep the audience mesmerized on his own, but he has a bass player and drummer to keep him company on that lonely stage. He played tunes from his new CD entitled *Other Songs*, as well as songs from his previous album and a couple of cover songs which exposed his influences, Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. It was a very informal and intimate set with some audience interaction and no set list.

It was a great night and an excellent show, and the atmosphere of the Blues Corner only added to the intimacy of the night.

NEIL FRASER



photo by Neil Fraser

Snakes to the mellow set of Ron Sexsmith. They were good, but nothing you haven't already seen before.

Ron Sexsmith was the highlight of the night, and probably the highlight of the weekend to some. While the Snakes' attitude deserves

Live in Halifax

LIVE MUSIC:

Blues Corner: October 2nd: Knucklebones (w Et Cetera); **3rd:** Chris Colepaugh and the Cosmic Crew (w Smiley); **4th:** Paul Ryan's Blues Matinee, Hu Noo (w Holiday Snaps); **6th:** 3 of a Kind; **7th:** Open Mic Night; **8th:** DJs Marc Willet and Andy Haigh; **Cafe Ole: 3rd:** The Thursday Toads, Livestock, Wizeeko, Magnus Haze; **4th:** Atlantic Skateboard Association Benefit: The Chitz, FYM, Sno Party, Lavender Hill Mob, The Deep Throats, The Rhondas; **Cheers: 2nd-5th:** Blueberry Grunt; **7th-8th:** Frank MacKay; **Market St. Jazz Cafe: 2nd:** PF Station; **3rd:** Andy Gillis; **4th:** Knifey Moloko; **5th:** Shan Arsenault; **8th:** Johnny Favourite's International CD Release Party (Dress swanky or don't come at all); **Peddler's Pub: 4th:** Kenny and Alex and the Swell Guys; **Reflections: 6th:** Sensible Footwear; **8th:** Pam Marsh Trio; **Seahorse Tavern: 6th:** Julia's Rain; **7th:** Thunderfunk; **The Tickle Trunk: 2nd:** Rasta Gumbo; **3rd:** Big Fish; **4th:** His Luscious Uncle; **5th:** Dale Lechter; **6th:** PF Station; **7th:** Open Mic Night; **8th:** Hu Noo; **Your Father's Moustache: 3rd:** Open Mic; **4th:** Joe Murphy's Blues Matinee; LoveDogs.

OTHER ENTERTAINMENT:

Dalhousie Art Gallery: Continuing until October 5th: Jack Bush: Earlier and Later Works; Cliff Eyeland: Abstract Paintings.

Graduating?

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