

Rex Morgan BC: Wah-Wah Freak rock from TV junkies

interview by Ron Kuipers

I've finally found that cafe where Peter Parker always takes Miss Brant. Or at least I thought I had found the band that always played there. I'm talking about Edmonton's own Rex Morgan B.C. A band straight out of T.V. land, these four local lads undertake a humorous parody of pop culture. I caught up to them Saturday night at the Sunset Club in the Ambassador Hotel.

The band's name comes from a bizarre blend of animated cartoon and comic book culture. The Rex Morgan refers to the soap-opera strip of the same name, and the B.C. stands for the Flintstones. The band's graphic symbol reflects this mix. It could be described as Rex's med head atop a beheaded Fred.

Upon first seeing the band, you are immediately struck by frontman/vocalist/keyboardsist Rip Van Hip (aka Mike Krauthahn). Lanky and goofy, I don't think he can find jackets that fit or pants that are long enough — but he sports a pretty cool Hawaiian t-shirt.

The rest of the band fills up the stage around him quite nicely. Augustus P. Mutt (aka Mark Malowany) plays the electro-quarterstaff. Ringo Mortiss (aka Paul Murphy) beats skins, tins, and bathtub gin. And rounding things off there is Zanzibar buck-buck McFaye (aka Steven Penny) on bass. He couldn't think of a cool alternate name for his instrument.

I asked them where they found the inspiration for their songs. With titles like "Sideburns and Blood" and "My Best Friend is a Les Schwab Dealer," I wasn't sure if I wanted to know. The band says they get ideas from "old T.V. series, stuff Mike gets on satellite." "Yah," Mike responds affirmatively, "I've got so much useless information in my head."

The band strongly denies the label "garage rock." "First of all," says Mike, "It's freak rock, not garage rock." What's the difference? "Freak rock is...freak," Mike clarifies. The rest



Ron Kuipers

"Sorry girl, I just can't help it. This is the look I dig." — *My Furry Vest* — Rex Morgan B.C.

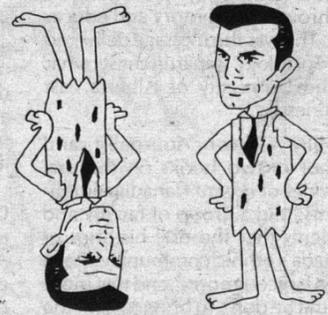
of the band helped him out. "Freak rock is garage music played in a basement."

The band, however, does have musical vision. "We're trying to synthesize Cadillac of Worms and Belinda Carlisle," they claim. "Actually, we're just trying to meet her." Whatever the case, they are "Rex Morgan B.C.: The band that doesn't offend." They also claim to be the band with the shortest hair and the worst eyesight.

They have come a long way. They remember the salad days "twenty billion years ago, when everything was excusably out of

tune." To give them their due, however, they have become much tighter musically, and in an inane way they are serious about what they do. They've recorded two songs on the Edmonton compilation album *Don't Let the Fruit Rot on the Tree*. They are also in the running for an Aria award.

Life as Rex Morgan B.C. see it would either be one of two things: 1) simple and funny, or 2) totally weird and funny. Either way, if so why not. Life without Rex Morgan B.C. would be like life without a wah-wah pedal: "a whole lot less purple and your stomach would feel all right."



Girls in the Gang has style

Girls in the Gang
Theatre Network
through November 12

review by Teresa Pires

On her departure from the Convent, Doreen Thompson had been warned, "Give everything to a man and may God have mercy on your soul!"

But along comes Eddy Boyd, the Canadian version of Richie Cunningham, and Doreen is as good as damned. Doreen gives everything to her man as do the other three women in *Girls in the Gang*. Their men happen to be none other than the members of the Boyd Gang, Canada's most famous bank robbers, who held up banks all over Southern Ontario during the early 1950's.

Girls in the Gang, directed by Stephen Heatley, begins with the four women simultaneously telling their stories, all four voices assaulting the audience, only to end with an abrupt, unfinished sentence beginning with "I." Like this unfinished sentence, the whole play is an effort to explain why four "good" girls (good with the possible exception of Mary Mitchell) loved a bunch of "bad" men. The girls, however, remain no closer to completion or to the understanding of the complexities of love at the end of the play than they are at the beginning.

"Every cell between my ears screamed 'Run away, you idiot,'" explains Anna Bosnich (Noal Augustson), but she cannot keep away from Valent Lesso (also known as Steve Suchan), even when she knows that he is sleeping with another woman. The 'other woman' is Mary Mitchell (Marianne Copithorne), a tough, gritty, street-wise blond who dismisses any opposition to her escapades with rationale such as "we're going to be ugly soon and then we'll be dead a long time." And rounding off the girls-in-the-gang is Anne Jackson, a somewhat prissy, insecure fashion model.

Since the story is mainly told from the womens' point of view, *Girls in the Gang* is more than just a romp through history or a behind-the-scenes National Enquirer type expose. Playwright Raymond Storey interweaves historical accounts with personal narratives and dramatic interchanges between the characters. At times, as many as

five different scenes are going on at once on stage, with image following image in rapid succession. And throughout all this are John Roby's songs — haunting, raunchy, and always powerful. Nola Auguston does the most justice to Roby's songs with her low, sultry voice, although Marianne Copithorne does a great job of belting out her numbers.

Copithorne's performance is the best of the four as Mary Mitchell. She goes to the Chinaman to fink on the boys after she is rejected by her lover, Valent Lesso. She's loud, direct, and often insensitive, but at the end of the story she's just as tender-hearted as the other girls. While Copithorne's performance is the most impressive, the other three women are also convincing and enter-

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taining in their roles.

As for the men, the play is not really about them, so their characters are not as developed or as mature as the womens'. The men do an acceptable job, although Glenn Wallis' (Steve Suchan/Valent Lesso) emotions often seem plastic and contrived.

But all of the characters do use Daniel Van Heyst's glitzy, chromed set imaginatively. The men climb over it (twice) to escape from prison. Mitchell is beaten behind it by the Chinaman (the audience sees only their outlines). As well, all the action in hotel rooms, banks, apartments, and bars is accommodated by it.

"You've got nothing 'till you've got real style," the women belt out in one of Roby's songs. *Girls in the Gang* definitely has style.



Stephen Samuel

Girls in the Gang plays in the Eva O. Howard Theatre in Victoria Composite High School through Nov. 12.