



The Tragically Hip are definitely the best bar band that I have ever personally seen. Their first performance at the Cosmo was outstanding and the SUB Cafeteria last year left me wondering when I could get my tickets for their next trip through town. So when I heard they were going to play here in December, my first thought was understandably incoherent. When I heard that it was going to be at the Aitken Centre, I couldn't help but think that this might ruin the perfect rep of the Hip in this fine college town.

Despite the lousy weather and the threat of even worse - and what, you might ask, would Rod Stewart have done (like I'd care) - Brent Lee and the Outsiders mosed on up to the stage and began the opening set at about nine o'clock. Not quite as hard-driving as Gord and the

boys, these guys were more like what the Hip would have been if they had all started drinking at a younger age. Promoting their new album, *Rose Tattoo*, The Outsiders provided a great opening act for the Hip. Although I am not a country music fan, I rather enjoyed the group's relaxed stage presence, and hell, they looked like they were having a blast!

When I was a kid back in Newfoundland, I remember that my parents had a wonderful collection of K-Tel doorstep albums - honest. And on every single one of them was "Hod Rod Lincoln." Brent Lee and the Outsiders surprised the shit out of everyone, I think that was the smell I detected, when they broke into this K-Tel classic. Believe it or not, everyone was enjoyin' it! Unfortunately for Brent and his band, as will tend to happen with many opening bands, the crowd began to chant for the Hip. Remember people, the sooner they come out the sooner they leave.

At 9:34, Brent Lee and the Outsiders left the stage, having pumped the audience for the main attraction in one way or another - either the people got bored and longed for the Hip, or the music got the chills out and the alcohol flowing in the veins (not that anyone drank before they came to the AUC). If the Tragically Hip had come on stage at this point I think that the ideal concert would have happened. You know what I mean, a couple of crushed boys and girls who don't know enough to stay out of the center front area of the crowd, especially if you have asthma or claustrophobia. (Un) Fortunately, this was not so.

Much to the dismay of much of the crowd, AUC security struggled to strengthen the stage barriers. As usual, idiots in the crowd saw fit to push everyone forward - "hey man, watch this, I can still stand up, way cool - c'mon, try it man, you'll like it!" Anyway, security picked red-faced potential deaths out of the crowd, and tried to get the lunatic fringe to ease up. This was a problem they had encountered during the last Hip performance, and eventually they ended the concert early. It is time for people to realize that a concert can be

enjoyed without the mob mentality.

After thirty minutes of negotiating life-like dolls out of the front row, security gave the thumbs up, and finally, the Tragically Hip.

Wasting little time, they burst into *Little Bones*, and id I am not mistaken, I heard the crack of little bones as the musical feeding frenzy began and the crowd drew tight to the barrier. From the first chord, I knew that my favorite bar band was going to become my favorite concert band.

Everything that I loved about the studio sessions of the songs was present. Most down home, rock n' roll bands have a hard time reproducing hit songs on stage. Rush is the only band I can think of that can do this to perfection, but the Hip were pretty damn close. Paul Langlois, Gord Sinclair, Bobby Baker and Johnny Fay were brilliant on stage and even if I could get up there and do what they did, I still could not complain.

Gord Downie. What is there to say about this guy. He is a coherent Jim Morrison, not acting, but seemingly feeling the music and submitting himself to reverberating waves. Sweating and spitting out words, relentlessly touring the stage, miming a fight and even tripping over stage wiring - complete entertainment. He has traded in his snakeskin boots for a pair of steel toes, but his distinctly

wavering voice - almost as though he were, oh, endearingly nervous perhaps - remains unmistakable.

They played most of their big hits, including *New Orleans is Sinking*, *Blow at High Dough*, *Bring it All Back*, *Fight*, *Twist My Arm*, and *Cordelia*. To non-fanatics of the hip who found a few songs may not have been that familiar, listen to the first album and all of the last two releases.

If I do not sound like I have been very critical of this concert I can only respond by saying that those of us who were there had a great time. I heard many people say that the tickets were expensive (yeah, I bought one), but many of these same dough-brains travelled to Montreal to see Marillion, to Ottawa to see Peter Gabriel, and even, and I am laughing, to Portland Maine to see Kiss! Need I say anymore. even more people pointed out that they did not know if they would like the Tragically Hip in a larger venue. Two things: take your head out of your ass, do you think that the SUB Cafeteria was the largest place the Hip had ever played anywhere; and, you live in Fredericton, N.B, where walking outdoors anywhere near a street can be risking your life, I hope you had a nice time doing nothing Tuesday night.

If I make it sound as though this was the best thing that has ever happened to me, then I am sorry, it

Photos by Mark Bray and Chris Hunt



wasn't. But, in a town that is offering decreasing numbers of live, well-known bands, we have to support those that do come here. If you don't have a good time, then maybe it was not the band's fault - give the next performance a fair chance. The Tragically Hip gave the AUC an aesthetically and technically butt-kicking performance - too bad you missed it Jody!

OMS