

ENTERTAINMENT

A lucky Friday the Thirteenth at the Market

Geography was never really a subject that I was enamoured with, but thanks to it more bands than ever are coming to town. Fredericton just happens to be a good distance from both Montreal and Halifax so it makes an ideal place to stop over and play a concert to a few adoring fans. And because of the Pop Explosion going on in Halifax last weekend, there were more than a few bands wanting to stop by. Five such bands all got together at the Farmer's Market and thanks to our friends at CHSR, Fredericton saw its best show in ages.

The Monoxides were the first band to take the stage, and they worked their way through a nice solid set despite the fact that there wasn't a very large crowd. One of the problems of going onstage at 7 o'clock I suppose. Hailing from that very exotic city Moncton, they play a nice loud guitar and have some decent songs too. They are still riding the wave from the release of their latest CD (*Out Of The Marsh*), and will no doubt be back in town again soon. A nice lively start to the evening.

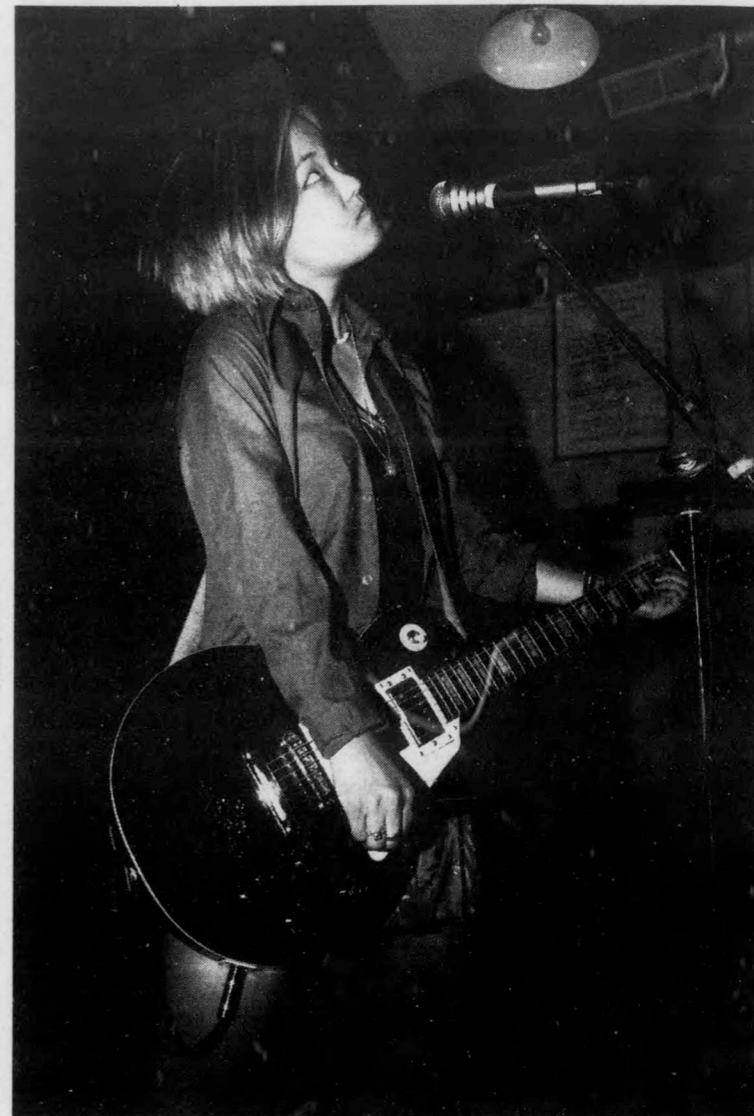
Pluto came to town last September and put on a damned good show. So I was really happy to see that they were coming back again for this, Fredericton's mini Pop Explosion. The market was beginning to fill up by that time, but with that it brought a small number of obnoxious people whose sole purpose seemed to be to heckle the band. And what is the best way to deal with hecklers? Heckle them back. In fact, Pluto did a bit more than heckle them - they wound the poor little punks up as much as they could, and then watched them go off. And what do punks do when they go off? They pogo, mosh and just generally push everyone around. Just like the old days. A lot less spitting though.

But getting back to Pluto. Their songs sound just as good live as they did on their debut album *Cool Way To Feel*, with nice spiky guitars and some of their patented vocal harmonies. And because their songs are so nice and succinct, they managed to fit a whole bunch of them into their half hour or so of performing. The crowd liked them. I liked them. I liked them a lot. I would have liked them a tiny bit more if they had played 'Rock Candy' though. Sigh. Never mind.

Afterwards, I had a quick chat to Justin and Ian from the band to find out what is new and exciting in the world of Pluto. And they had some big news to share too - the band has just signed a major record deal. Yup, just a couple of weeks ago they took the plunge and signed with Virgin but it won't affect their label-hopping exploits that they do with 7" singles. In fact, they have just finished recording a new single in Seattle which will be coming out on Stampede Records. And in keeping with their new habit of sticking cover versions on the B side, they have recorded a Cars song - which one they neglected to say, but I'm sure that it will



Cub. What more can you say? From left to right - Lisa, Lisa G. (hiding at the back on drums) and Robynn



Way cool photos by the way cool Mark Bray

be just as entertaining as the Beatles one on the flipside of 'Failure'.

In the meantime they will be continuing to tour as touring is the thing that they like the best. In fact, their love of touring is one of the main reasons for signing with a major; "because we are so gung-ho about touring, but our records aren't in the shops we felt that the time was right to make the move," explained Ian. The band put so much into their live shows too, with their songs sounding a bit louder and a bit heavier, but the real pop essence of Pluto still shines through. And that is why they very much will be famous one day soon. Only time will tell.

Hayden was an added bonus on the bill as he wasn't originally going to be coming along. But he did, and he was also selling some rather cool t-shirts too (until the copyright people catch up with him anyway). I was sort of wary of his being stuck in the middle of the other four bands, but I was pleasantly surprised as he really did get a good response from the crowd. People were almost dancing. Or as much as you can to the sombre kind of songs that Hayden bellows out while attacking his acoustic guitar. Maybe it was a bit mellower than the previous bands, but it did give the audience a chance to get their breath back before things livened up again. But it is now official - Hayden is sad. We don't know why, but if there is anything that we can do to help, then all he has to do is ask. Maybe the interview which you can find elsewhere

in this week's *Brunswickan* might hold the answer.

Pansy Division were the only band on the bill that I hadn't heard too much about. The phrase 'gay punk band who used to hang out with Green Day' was the most common thing. So I was a little unprepared about what to expect. I needn't have been, as musically they were more or less as they were described to me. But what I didn't expect was the very funny lyrics that were far from subtle about the fact that the band members were gay. Those dear little punks in the audience were not too impressed by the band and so restarted their heckling. Fortunately Chris Freeman (on bass) was more than up to the challenge and soon had them retreating with their tails between their legs. Which left us free to enjoy the antics of Chris, who was just so damned entertaining. And he won the 'best t-shirt of the evening contest' hands down. It was an awful lot of fun.

I managed to get a quick chat to Chris and the singer/guitarist Jon Ginoli afterwards and found out a bit more about Pansy Division. Hailing from San Francisco, they formed the band about four years ago, with the latest drummer, Dustin, being added last year. As Jon explained, "Pansy Division were the band we were waiting to come along. We wanted to hear a gay band play this kind of stuff but there wasn't one. So we thought that maybe we could try, but never thought we'd be very popular - maybe play in San Francisco or New York. But we never thought we'd make

it as far as Fredericton." And what about Chris's behaviour onstage where he flaunts his sexuality - is he scared of any repercussions? "Not any more. I've been paranoid for too long, beaten up in High School. I've been through the worst. And the crowd polices itself - the ones that don't like us go away themselves." They have had to cope with vicious crowds too - there are dents in Chris's bass from things that have been thrown at him.

The band say that the majority of their fans are straight simply because their brand of music isn't what the gay community listens to; "they just listen to showtunes and disco," jokes Jon. Some gays might appreciate what they do, but they just don't like the music. And Pansy Division can cope with that as they seem to have carved themselves a nice little niche in which they can continue to exist. Gay and proud.

And then there was Cub. They might have said at one point that they would never headline a show, but they do now and they do a pretty good job of doing it too. And best of all, they had quite a few new songs to share with us too, such as their new single 'The Day I Said Goodbye' which must rank as one of their best songs ever. Ever. But they did also do a bunch of older songs with the main focus being the *Come Out, Come Out* album. The most obvious shift in the band's sound was the way that the songs were kinda loud - was this the same band that gave us 'My Chinchilla' (which was conspicuous by its absence)? Yes it was. There were some problems

with the sound with feedback reaching almost epic proportions at some points, but Robynn battled on and in the end she did win out. It didn't really matter as everyone was dancing, and they just didn't care. The other two Lisas were also doing a good job; the whole band's playing has really developed, and despite having the summer off to work as a camp counsellor, Lisa was just wonderful on drums. Really, she was (despite thinking that she wasn't, but that is a longer story...). The only minor complaint that I might have (but would probably keep quiet about) was that their set was just so short. I'm sure that it is just because of the stealth with which they perform now, but it did seem rather short. Oh well, some Cub is always better than none.

Not surprisingly, I had a nice long chat with Cub after the show, and as usual they had an awful lot to say. They are two weeks into a six week tour with Pluto and Pansy Division which will take them as far as Boulder, Colorado and then they will hook up with the Potatomen (with whom they have a split single with at the moment) for another two weeks. That eight week stint is their longest bout of touring to date. After it is all done, they will go home for a little bit of a rest, then it is back on the road to New York for a show on New Year's Eve. And then? "Rest, rest, rest. Practise, practise, practise. Record, record, record." in the words of Lisa G, drummer extraordinaire. Which means that they should have a new album out next spring, and then it is a return to their almost endless tours which the