

Great Big Sea brings back the music

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

The Great Big Picnic is coming to town again this Saturday. This day-long concert, a brain child of celtic-rock band Great Big Sea, is three years old this summer, and is coming to Halifax for the second year in a row.

Now visiting many venues across the Atlantic Provinces, the

Great Big Picnic was originally planned only for St. John's, Newfoundland.

"We wanted to bring a world class-type festival day to St. John's, which at the time didn't have anything like that," said Great Big Sea member Alan Doyle.

The Picnic aims to gather bands from a variety of musical

genres which will attract an audience of all ages. Each year, the band starts with a "wish list" of who they would like to play with, often including friends or favourite bands. After all, the Picnic is not just a business venture, it's a chance to have a little fun on the road, in their own backyard.

"It's so much fun. It's an absolute riot," said Doyle. "Most people don't know that. I don't know if we should keep it secret or not."

This year's line-up includes the Watchmen, Bran Van 3000, Colin James and the Little Big Band, and the Ennis Sisters.

It's been a busy year for Great Big Sea, who have now been on the road since May 5.

"We're not the kind of band who tours 6 weeks at a time every four years," said Doyle. "We're constantly touring."

They have recently had their first American CD release, *Rant and Roar*, which is a compilation of songs from both *up* and *Play*. To promote this release, they've just opened several shows on the Guinness Fleadh tour with the Chieftains and Sinead O'Connor, touring both the US and the UK.

"We couldn't have asked for a better introductory tour," said Doyle.

They have also just released *Play* in Europe and have been playing at many prestigious

folk festivals all over Europe from Italy to Denmark.

"It's a challenge for any folk band to be accepted into this clique of 20-30 bands who play these festivals," said Doyle.

With such a busy schedule, it's difficult to get back home and relax — but don't expect to see Great Big Sea relocating to Toronto or New York to make life easier.

"It's tough to operate a band out of Newfoundland," Doyle admits, "but we're homebodies. The more popular the band gets, the less we get home. We get home often, but not for long."

Newfoundland is definitely where their hearts are. Along with other plans, the band would also like to find the time to put out a couple of B-records — something a bit different from the run-of-the-mill Great Big Sea release. These include a record of only "sea-chanteys", a collection of traditional Newfoundland Christmas songs, and even a collection of Newfoundland francophone songs — what Doyle calls a "mammoth effort" considering none of the group members are fluent in French.

In the fall, the band plans to return to the US for another concert tour, and then return home in October to work on a new album, due out next summer.



Silent Radar
The Watchmen
EMI

The Watchmen are an anomaly on today's music scene. In a world of post-grunge pop and rock, where the emphasis is placed on getting the cheap first hit out on the radio with no consideration given to creating solid albums, the Watchmen have abandoned the typical formula by creating a strong album with several strong radio-friendly singles to boot.

Silent Radar is another step in the progression of one of Canada's most under-rated bands. And instead of copying the aged Canadian trend set by bands like Our Lady Peace, the Watchmen have embarked upon an ambitious plan to differ.

Because of the hollow, space-like feel produced by most of the tracks, *Silent Radar* is an apt title for the disc. In many ways, the band is following the lead of Radiohead, whose *Paranoid Android* employed many of the same effects, but was more intricate.

GREG MCFARLANE

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EDMONTON	—	16:10	—	—	10:25	—	—
CALGARY	18:45	—	18:45	13:55	—	—	—
TORONTO	15:35	14:35	11:45 14:30	12:40 15:40	11:30 23:35	10:10	—
ST. JOHN'S	—	19:55	—	18:35	—	—	—

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