

# big event in Halifax

## Halifax On Music Festival outclasses that guy in the hat

Friday September 13  
Reflections Cabaret

State Champs/Broken Girl/  
Duotang/Jale

Reflections was an odd venue for an indie rock show. Flashing strobe lights and excruciatingly loud techno music made for strange bookends to sets by the likes of Broken Girl and Jale. The techno was pumping until the moment when the DJ yelled, "All right party people!" and introduced the State Champs. I'll bet they've never had an intro quite like that before.

The Champs have a new bassist — Yan Raymond — and a new sound that falls somewhere between Polvo, Archers of Loaf, and the Swirlies. The festival showcase afforded them the chance to show off all-new unreleased material. Highlights included the addictive "Lazy Instruments" and their memorable closing number, "Drown the Harmony." Regular member Andy Sawler is still recovering from a skateboarding injury and hasn't got the use of his arm back yet, so J Lapointe of the Motes (just recovered from, yes, a skateboarding injury) filled in on guitar.

Next up was Broken Girl, and it was the longest and maybe the best set that I've seen by Julie Doiron Claytor. The highlights of the set for me were the same songs that have consistently been my favourites on her CD: "Waiting for Baby", "Elevator Show", and "Dance Music". Remarkably, despite the dance bar setting, the crowd was actually quiet and attentive. They seemed to be showing respect for the guts that it takes to go up on a stage alone with just a guitar to sing deeply personal songs. Her signature nervousness is still palpable but her confidence is obviously increasing too. Julie did some new songs that sounded promising and will be recorded for a new CD which we will see no sooner than next April on Sub Pop.

Duotang is a bass-and-drums duo from Winnipeg, with a just-released full-length on Mint Records of Vancouver. I can only think of two other bass-and-drums duos that I've seen, and these guys can't compare with the Inbreds for songwriting or with godheadSilo for sheer rock supremacy. But despite lacklustre covers of the Pixies and Beatles (do we really need to hear "She loves you yeah yeah yeah" one more time?) I think they've definitely defined their own new-wave-inflected niche. They certainly seemed to make some friends in the crowd.

You might recall that Jale were on tour recently and had to cancel it for family reasons after only a few shows. This was essentially a regrouping show for them, and as you might expect there was no new material and no radical re-arrangements, just a good selection of material from their most recent LP, *So Wound*. They opened with "Hey Hey" and rocked out through a 45-minute set. They performed well but seemed a little troubled by the substandard sound. It seemed like someone was asleep at the switch when it came to getting the vocal levels up, and the guitar sounds were quite awful at times (apparently there were

some problems with equipment). Jale was cheered on by a large, enthusiastic crowd, and this mostly-appreciative audience may have been just the encouragement the band was needing.

JAMES COVEY

Saturday, September 14th  
Café Olé

Absolutely Nothing/Trike/  
Supercar/Man of Steel/The Chitz

As Hurricane Hortense raged through the city last Saturday night, punk music was raging inside Café Olé. As part of the Halifax On Music Festival, the cafe was host to an amazing show. Over 100 fans piled in for the all ages concert featuring local favourites Absolutely Nothing, Trike, and The Chitz, as well as visiting bands Supercar and Man of Steel.

Opening the show were Halifax's Absolutely Nothing, whose punk/pop style quickly caught the crowd's attention with their version of the old Blondie hit, "The Tide Is High". They played a half hour's worth of original (and some Plumtree) material, fighting off numerous technical problems to give a great performance.

Absolutely Nothing were followed by another Halifax group, Trike. You may have heard this four piece band on CKDU where their self-titled CD has produced Top 5 hits. Unfortunately, though they played well, Trike also suffered from technical problems, and the vocals could rarely be heard over the music.

Next up was the PEI-based band Supercar, who really got the crowd going. Supercar have been playing around PEI since 1993, and have developed quite a following. At least 10 die-hard fans were on hand who'd made the trek with them to Halifax. And who could blame them? These guys had a really impressive pop/punk style and such

enthusiasm on stage that they were fun to watch. Supercar just screamed success — they are definitely worth looking out for in the future.

Following Supercar was a half hour delay setting up for the next performers, but when Montreal's Man of Steel finally did take the stage, it took no time at all for them to win over the impatient crowd. In the spirit of the evening, they sang a version of CCR's "Have You Ever Seen The Rain?", sending it out to our friend Hortense. The fans were dancing and cheering at the announcement of a soon to be released CD. Looks like Man of Steel's first trip to the East Coast can be called a success.

The highlight of the night came at about 10 p.m., when Halifax's The Chitz took the stage to close the show. They began by selling the final fifteen copies of their 7" record to audience members for \$2.00 a piece. The Chitz had the crowd on their feet throughout their performance of original material. Although most of their songs were in the 1 minute range, they covered some pretty serious topics: "Break the Cycle" is a song about abusive relationships; and "Abuse Sells" talks about the media exploiting women. The Chitz played for roughly a half hour, and then would only agree to an encore if all the guys on the dancefloor would take their shirts off! In the humidity of the cafe, I don't think anyone refused.

All in all, it was an unforgettable night of music for punk fans, intensified only by the storm outside. Fans staggered in and out all night — dripping wet and wind-blown. They even moshed in a circle (and made a point of doing it counter-clockwise) to mimic the hurricane. All seemed quite satis-



Push Kings

DANIELLE BOUDREAU

fied with the night's performances as they donned their raincoats and put up their umbrellas to brave the storm on the way home.

NATALIE MACLELLAN

Saturday, September 14 Birdland

SIANspheric/Scud Mountain  
Boys/Pushkings/Change of Heart/  
Sloan

I arrived just in time to hear someone in the Birdland lineup plead for admission to the sold out show ("But I drove all the way from Moncton in the hurricane...") and realized that I had just missed the Scud Mountain Boys. This was a very sad thing, as I've since heard that their tearjerking gritty country was one of the highlights of the weekend (with Garth Brooks playing down the street, no less). I was told they sounded a bit like the Skydiggers/Black Pool with a pedal steel guitar.

I also missed SIANspheric, who opened the evening with a spacey, effects-driven drone that was trance-inducing to some and merely annoying to others. They reminded me of Spiritualwhen I saw them Sunday night at the impromptu Birdland show. It was definitely something for which you would have to be in the mood. The vocalist made silly faces and wore no shoes.

The Pushkings began their set just as I arrived at Birdland. At first they seemed a little too cute, with their clear-voiced Beatlesque harmonies, and mod moptops shaking in unison. "Which one is paul? They all are," is a paraphrased comment by the same person who made the Skydiggers/Scud Mountain Boys comparison. But the band gradually won over all but the most sullen audience members just like the poumons did at last year's pop explosion. Pop-intentional smily face Brit-pop. I liked them a lot.

Change of Heart seemed especially loud and cynical by comparison. Ian Blurton was in fine curmudgeon form, mocking the exchange of devil hand symbols engaged in by the new bass player

and certain members of the crowd. The energy level of this band consistently amazes me.

By the time Sloan took the stage Birdland was a sauna. Hot, sticky and packed like sardines, the crowd was nevertheless predictably appreciative and greeted each song with cries of recognition and persistent, unsuccessful stage-diving. This was, after all, Sloan's first official Halifax show in over a year and Halifax was determined to have fun. The band seemed a little less enthused, but what they lacked in their usual spontaneity they made up for in polish. In fact, the only really goofy moment was a cover of the Smiths' "What difference does it make" complete with whiney feedback that the band did during the encore. Sloan's set relied heavily on their most recent *One Chord to Another* record and they performed only one track from their first lp (a frenzied version of "Marcus Said") to end the show.

I still can't believe the number of people who attended. I think this was the biggest show of the festival.

KATRINA GRENTZ

Sunday, September 15 The Sanctuary (1566 Barrington)

Halifax On Music Finale

Danko Jones/Plumtree/Local Rabbits/Mavis Piggot/Elevator to Hell/Chixdiggit

It said in the program that the doors would open at 5:00 p.m. and the first band would go on at 5:30. Well, unlike the majority of the Halifax On Music shows, this one did not live up to that claim. The doors did not open until after 5:30 and the first band, Danko Jones, didn't go on until 6:22.

When Danko Jones hit the stage, I don't think anyone knew what to expect. This band doesn't even have a single release to their name. Most people ignored their opening schpiel about how everyone should be taking notes about their style. Their music spoke for itself though.

Continued on page 11



Local Rabbits

DANIELLE BOUDREAU