ENTERTAINMENT

Working class heroes to hit town

Junkhouse get ready to go Trick or Treating in their usual "Four scary guys" costumes

by Mark Savoie
***Brunswickan* Entertainment**

The first thing that one has to realise when one listens to Junkhouse is that this is a blue collar band. And it's not just that they're a blue collar band, but it's that they come by this status honestly, hailing as they do from Hamilton, Ontario, the bluest of Canada's cities; the "Liverpool of North America," as lead singer Tom Wilson put it. "We all grew up in neighbourhoods where people worked and people drank and people looked after their children."

The blue collar mentality of Hamilton has had its impact on the band. The songs on their latest CD—*Birthday Boy*—are a testament to life on the wrong side of the tracks, of people who didn't get daddy to pay their way through university and/or buy Buffy a Jeep. The blue collar, working man's mentality carries over to their politics. This is not a band which endorses Mike Harris's PC government in Ontario. In fact, Wilson's attitude towards Mike Harris is that his policies are destroying working class culture and industrial cities such as Hamilton. He writes that 'Burn For You' is the "instruction manual for the tired, the unsatisfied, the over worked." In short,

The roots of Junkhouse is also a somewhat violent world. 'Big Daddy' is about a man who "beat some guy's head in at the Jamesway Motor Inn." Plus, Tom Wilson writes in his song 'Drink' that he "once took a bus all the way from Toronto to Kingston, Ontario to punch a guy in the mouth." He also mentions that he's liked the few friends he has who are in prison "better than most people I've ever met who opened a book at any university." A look at Junkhouse confirms that they are still capable of handling themselves in a bar fight. They **are** a physical presence. When asked *The Brunswickan*'s traditional question about their ability to take out Moxy Früvous, Wilson merely asked in return, "Fuck, what do you think?" They are not the toughest band in Canada, however. Wilson claims that Randy Bachman would be pretty hard to take down and that Anne Murray would be even tougher, although he does admit that he does have a couple of guys who stir some shit while he sits back and has a few beer.

Alcohol is a major part of the blue collar mentality of which Junkhouse is a part, and this is clearly reflected in their songs. 'Down in the Liver' is the most obvious example of this, along with the aforementioned 'Drink'. They are not, however, a feel good–drinking–sing along with Stan Rogers type of band. Their songs about alcohol do not glorify drinking *per se*, they merely refer to it as a fact of life, as a source of both regrettable pain and necessary forgetfulness. It is hardly coincidental that this is a view of alcohol which has long been a reality of working class life, despite attempts by middle class reformers bent on instilling their values in a misguided attempt to uplift the working class.

The most distinctive track on *Birthday Boy*—as distinctive in its own right as was 'Gimme the Love' off of *Strays*, their inaugural CD—is 'Burned Out Car'. Wilson is an accomplished lyricist in his own right, but on this one he teamed up Murray McLaughlan to produce some of the most haunting lyrics to be heard this year. The chorus starkly states: "I live in a car that doesn't go no where / It's one short step to a shopping cart / In a twilight world that has no heart / I watch the sun go down from a burned out car." Unfortunately, much of the haunting quality of this song may be lost when they perform at The Dock this Tuesday. On the CD Tim Wilson's gravel strewn voice is joined by the pure strains of Sarah McLachlan. "She's a fan of ours, actually, so surprisingly, we didn't have to con her at all," answered Wilson when asked how they were able to convince her to join them on this track.

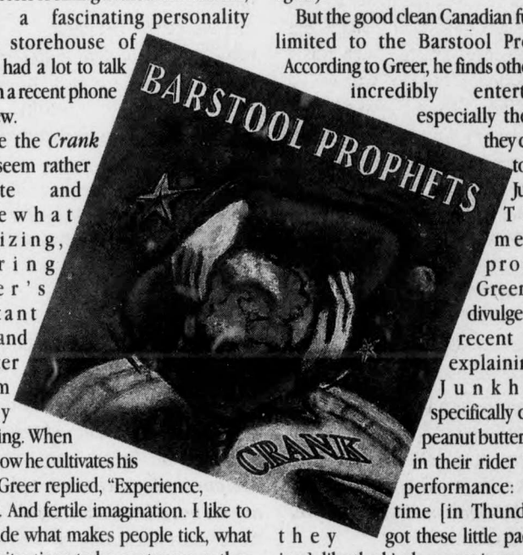
It shouldn't be all that surprising that McLachlan is a fan of Junkhouse. Under the leadership of Tim Wilson they have become one of the most thought provoking no frills blues/rock bands in Canada. However, given their penchant of writing songs sympathetic with the travails of working class life, it remains to be seen how well they will be accepted in a polite little white bread university town like Fredericton.

Prophets predict interesting show

by Peter J. Cullen
***Brunswickan* Entertainment**

The Barstool Prophets have a damn good job. They crisscross the country playing their own original material, they get to hang around with the upper echelon of Canadian musicians, and they even get paid for such an envious vocation. So is it any wonder that the band loves their profession and has fun at the same time?

Over the past four years, vocalist Graham Greer, guitarist Al Morier, bassist Glenn Forrester and drummer Bobby Tamas have travelled across the nation pushing their name and independent *Deflowered* CD. But 1995 has given rise to the band's first major album on the Mercury/Polydor label, entitled *Crank*. With success looming in the band's future, Greer, a fascinating personality and a storehouse of stories, had a lot to talk about in a recent phone interview.



Since the *Crank* songs seem rather desolate and somewhat agonizing, hearing Greer's constant jests and laughter seem really surprising. When asked how he cultivates his songs, Greer replied, "Experience, I guess. And fertile imagination. I like to get inside what makes people tick, what makes situations to be as strange as they are. I try to analyze that, get inside it, and put it into the lyrics."

Reading the words and gazing at the bleak drawings inside the CD booklet, the Barstool Prophets give the impression that life just is not fun. However, browsing the liner notes suggest the four men, all in their mid-twenties, are not that depressing after all. With comments such as 'People to blame if we screw up ...' and 'Unauthorized reproduction of this work ... could be construed as an act of war, and would therefore be subject to retaliation,' the group apparently possesses a sense of humour. "We're a little off kilter, a little wacky ... A lot of people really don't get that dichotomy [between the lyrics and the liner notes]. I wrote the liner notes too, so I show my lighter side, I guess. I don't know why the songs are so dark. It's just the topics I write about. That kind of stuff fascinates me," Greer commented.

The lead singer soon cut loose and started relating stories of road adventures, reminiscing about his unique run-in with Canadian music legend Bruce Cockburn. The Barstool Prophets had opened that night for Barney Bentall, and Cockburn and Bentall sang together to finish the evening. "I'm just wasted by the end of the show," laughed Greer, "and Bruce comes offstage and I'm like 'Bruuuce, how's it goin'?' and I slap him in the arm, and he looks at me like he's scared, eh. And he's like 'Uh, I'm doing okay.' And I go 'Heeey, Brucester!' and I hit him again and I winked at him and he just walked away from me (laughs). I hope he didn't know who I was ... I got about 10 feet away and I went 'What the *hell* was I doing?'. That's my brush with a guitar icon. But most of my encounters with Canadian music people aren't that bad (laughs again)."

But the good clean Canadian fun is not limited to the Barstool Prophets. According to Greer, he finds other bands incredibly entertaining, especially the group they currently tour with: Junkhouse. Their mention prompted Greer to divulge another recent story, explaining how Junkhouse specifically demands peanut butter and jam in their rider for each performance: "So this time [in Thunder Bay] they got these little packets [of jam], like the kind you get in restaurants. They got a whole box of these so I took the box and bread and the knife and I went out on stage with a chair and I sat on stage while they played and made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and threw them into the crowd (big laugh). So who knows what can happen on Halloween?"

When asked if his life was now all 'champagne and caviar dreams,' Greer replied, "It's more beer and chips – which isn't bad! So we're having a great time, meeting all kinds of people all over the place. It's not a shabby job. We're not Madonna or anything, but we're having a great time."

As the group continues their opening gigs with some of the nation's best bands, they are obviously enjoying the perks and profits of the musician's lifestyle. The only thing that would make it even better would be breakthrough fame and fortune. But in their strive for success, Greer and the other Barstool Prophets are definitely going to be having fun along the way.

...COMPETITION TIME...COMPETITION TIME...COMPETITION TIME...COMPETITION TIME...

This week we have a special giveaway for you, with **FOUR** copies of the new Junkhouse album **Birthday Boy** (one is one of those nifty new CD thingys, and the other three are just lowly cassettes...) to go to the quartet who can answer the following:

What city do Junkhouse come from? (it's in the article, silly!!!)

Get yer entrées to The Bruns office before Tuesday at 6 pm, and you will probably win. Really, you will. Just ask last week's winners who were:

Mark Robichaud, Martin Brown and Stacey Brown.

Come to our offices and pick up your prize sometime soon. Ta very much to all who entered.