

Barney Bentall is Doctor Strangelife

by J. Heidi Radford

There is something to be said about people who live on the coasts. Vancouver based Barney Bentall and The Legendary Hearts' exuberant performance this weekend at the Misty Moon was proof they share this care-free coastal attitude with Haligonians.

"Halifax is a place that really knows how to have a good time - and good on ya," says Barney Bentall, lead singer of Canada's acclaimed rock group Barney Bentall and The Legendary Hearts.

Promoting the release of their third album *AIN'T LIFE STRANGE*, Bentall and the band arrived on the East Coast this weekend to play two shows Friday and Saturday night at the Misty Moon.

The band returned to Vancouver to wrap up their Canadian concert tour. They have been on tour across Canada for a month and Bentall says it has been a gruelling tour with lots of press and 'in stores'.

I spoke with the band before Friday's show and they said they were feeling comfortably at home with the salt air ("conducive to great singing," says Bentall), our similar youthful city and thriving culture. This comfort was obvious when the group performed Saturday night.

Time was meaningless when Barney Bentall and The Legendary Hearts took to the stage at 1 a.m. The crowd woke up to the band's presence with immense enthusiasm, maintained until well after the fans secured the encore performance.

"Tonight is great," says Bentall. "I'm really amazed, it is 2 am and people are actually really focused."

Bentall performed for a captivated crowd as each tune was played with clarity and total energy. The enthusiasm was obviously contagious and Bentall knew exactly how to work his audience. Bentall led into a popular tune from their new album *AIN'T LIFE STRANGE* titled "Doin' Fine" by complementing the fans on their nocturnal energy.

"We really want to compliment you people on your stamina out here. I can't believe it. It is unparalleled



across this great country of ours," exclaimed Bentall to a very responsive crowd.

When I spoke to the band in between the two sets, Bentall said Saturday's performance was measuring up to be one of the best on the tour. He felt the two performances at the Moon each took on a different atti-

tude. Friday night had been a definite bar crowd and therefore they shortened their show whereas Saturday was more of a concert crowd and so they played into the wee hours of the morning. I think it is fair to assume they preferred the latter.

The non-performing lyricist of the

Daedalism at the Duece

by Lange Zippel

Friday. I'm sick of my room, my roommates, my pile of critical theory texts, my computer screen and my neighbour, who starts her day (and consequently mine) by having the loudest sex humanly possible at 7 am in a room mere meters from my sanctuary of learning and sleep. She redeems herself after her morning workout by cranking up the Beasties' "No Sleep Till Brooklyn", which, followed by N.B.N.'s "O.P.P.", gets my bones jumpy and reminds me that tonight my amiga and I have plans to confront the Draught Beer God in his Halifax lair, a.k.a. the Duece.

I like the Duece, which has the atmosphere and reasonable prices the Flamingo lacks, and they do you the great favour of keeping the music down to about 120 dB so you can actually hear yourself screaming at the waiter for beer. We go to our favourite table, the one at the back where you can avoid looking at all the other people, at around 9:30 p.m. and by the time the Gluetones ap-

pear on stage our fruitful encounter with Mister Beer has nicely opened the neural networks. The Gluetones are a kind of surf-jangle outfit who play a few instrumentals and have a bald singer and guitar player, looks like an art school project to me and nobody pays much attention to their fairly low-key set. I keep thinking, if they played about twice as fast and twice as loud, they would get more attention.

By the time the gluetones start breaking down their gear the Duece is filling up nicely. Lots of artsy-fartsy people. They wear many different Cool Things: plaid, dreadlocks, those horrible Guatemalan shirts, tarnished sidewalk-hippie jewelry and most are members of the doc Martens school of like-footedness. A few more glasses of beer and Furnaceface take to the stage. They look like products of a marriage between Jane's Addiction and the clientele of Cafe Mokka and, although I'm skeptical after being disappointed by their recent disc *Just Buy It*, once they pick up their instruments and launch into "Government Cheque" I am as convinced as the

mass of people who are on the dance floor jumping up and down that I am in the presence of some serious high-volume muscle. This

early age of five and many believe this friendship within the business partnership is the secret ingredient to Barney Bentall and The Legendary Hearts success.

AIN'T LIFE STRANGE confirms

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tune pumps and skitters from straight-out "Had A Dad"ish riffing into hip-hop drum-and-vocal sequences and within minutes everybody clusters around the dance floor, watching the bass player (an uglier Eric A.) in his trenchcoat and the keyboard player in his dress doing Elton John-meets-Metallica manoeuvres.

Furnaceface loses the audience for the next couple of songs, which take them into mid-eighties hardcore territory that people don't want to explore, but about halfway through their set they come back to more recent material such as "Thinks She's Fat" and "We Love You Tipper Gore" and everyone responds with both plenty of noise and lots of body movement. They get called back for a short encore which includes a straightforward "Dead or Alive" and then we are left to the DJ's whims and the inexhaustible resources of the bar.

Furnaceface has been on tour for five weeks, ad mare usque ad mare, and this, their second Halifax show before a long drive to Quebec City, was a loud and muscular production that convinced my friend and I that, sometimes, a live act beats a bottle of bourbon and our tape collection. Please, I thought as my bed rose up to softly grab me, let my neighbour be celibate for the next ten hours.

Toasted Westerns

by Gazette Staff

Jody Benjamin and Sally Robinson are The Toasted Westerns. In bright pink running shoes, baggy pants, funky hats and punky hairdos, they may look as much like female country and western singers as Keith Richards does a choir boy but don't let that fool ya. Even without the Dolly Parton hair or the "I'm helpless without a man attitude" they manage to fry up some genuine country tunes.

While Jody hails from Moosejaw, country wasn't always her favourite. "I hated country music as a kid. I was forced to listen to it because that's what my stepfather liked".

Herside-kick, Sally Robinson, was a classical music teacher and accompanied ballet classes until she met up with Benjamin, who was on the look out for a bass player. That same weekend Robinson went out and bought a second-hand bass guitar. "I didn't know what I was doing, we could barely make it through a song, but it was just so fun" That was over four years ago. Since then this Ottawa-based duo has been performing everywhere from Peterborough to Yellowknife with steady dates on the club circuit in Ottawa.

They have one cassette release to date, a mixture of originals and covers including a "toasted" version of an old Pearl Bailey tune, "Mambo Tango Samba Calypso Rhumba Blues", which features a soul-searching trumpet solo by Sally Robinson and her invisible trumpet. Benjamin wrote the first song on their self-titled release "Honky Tradeswoman", a rousing tribute to power tools. It has a decided autobiographical slant

since Benjamin is a full-time carpenter.

"Purse in Perth" is also a true story. A few years back after the Blue Skies Music Festival in the Ottawa Valley, Benjamin was driving home and stopped off for coffee in Perth. She left her purse behind. Rather than drive all the way back for it she phoned the restaurant and they offered to mail it to her. Then the post office went on strike. "For weeks all my friends were saying, 'did you hear about your purse', says Benjamin, "I never got it back".

In concert, The Toasted Westerns are known for their smart, savvy, wickedly-wise philosophy and gently tongue-in-cheek stage show. "I guess a certain attitude runs throughout our work, but we're not intentionally political," says Jody, "We're not trying to deliver a message but we do sing about our lives and we just don't happen to have traditional lives". Musically they blend warm folk harmonies with a country and western twang, blues rhythms and plenty of comedy.

So why the name Toasted Westerns? Sally Robinson explains, "I used to eat a lot of toasted westerns, we're both from the West, we play western music and I guess we're a little toasted".

This will be their first trip to Halifax. They had planned to make it out during the summer to do a little busking. "Hopefully this gig will get our foot in the door and we'll be invited back with the full platter", says Jody.

Teazel Productions present The Toasted Westerns at The Church, 5657 North Street, Saturday, November 21st. Doors open at 8pm.



Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala

The munificence of Menchú

by Robert Currie

At the age of eight, Rigoberta Menchú was picking 35 pounds of coffee a day in the plantations of rich Guatemalan landlords. In the next few years, she would see her 16-year old brother tortured by the army and then burnt alive. In turn, her mother and father would also be savagely killed. On December 10, the young woman who refused to be intimidated receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala is her first-hand account of life under the repressive Guatemalan governments. It details the suffering of Indians at the hands of the landowners, the military and the wealthy elite who rule Guatemala. Pesticides are sprayed on the fields while the Indians work, poisoning them. While working as a maid for a rich family in the capital, Rigoberta discovers that the family's dog gets better food than she does. When Indians cause problems, they are killed without hesitation. But instead of robbing her of her dignity

and her culture, Rigoberta redoubles her efforts to fight for human rights for her people.

Death, planned and random, runs through the book. Malnutrition, disease, torture, poisoning, execution are part of Rigoberto's life from birth. Yet while the horrors she has witnessed are graphically portrayed, the overriding spirit of the book is one of hope, compassion, and dignity.

Her beliefs, and the beliefs of her Maya-Quiché people, do not conform to the conventional notions of left and right. Birth control she views as a grave evil, but homosexuality is accepted as normal. Her people take up arms against the military, but it is a rebellion driven by the intense conservatism of a culture which views deviation from the ways on one's ancestors as a step towards annihilation. "Anyone who doesn't dress as our grandfathers, our ancestors, dressed, is on the road to ruin."

But I, Rigoberta Menchú is not a primer on Guatemalan history or politics, or a survey of the plight of Latin American natives. It is story told from the point-of-view of a lit-

er-educated woman from a remote village, and as such has many gaps where a reader expects to find dates, details, history or analysis.

The book itself originated in a series of interviews with Menchú conducted by anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. Unfortunately, the book often reads like a transcript, with repetitions and digressions, making the sequence of events sometimes hard to discern.

Furthermore, the book never strays from Rigoberto's perspective. This is the book's greatest strength, but also its greatest weakness. When describing the customs of her people or the horrors inflicted by the military and the landowners, her intensely personal narrative is eloquent and moving. But one yearns for a wider view, some context to the horrors she documents.

Despite its shortcomings as a book, I, Rigoberta Menchú is forthright and compelling. As Menchú writes: "My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people."

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