

# Entertainment



The awe-ful twosome known as the Inbreds

Marc Landry Photo

## THE INBREDS

The Loading Dock  
Thursday, November 10, 1994

By Nick Oliver (the real one this time)

The voices wailed. The crowd, once restless, was now attentive. The guitar chord sang out and the people rejoiced. Hallelujah! From the opening notes of 'King of the Past', The Rheostatics had already fulfilled their debt to Fredericton. Having cancelled planned concert dates here twice in the past four years, a now well-overdue appearance was very much worth waiting for. Opening with a piece that mentions Fredericton by name earns them brownie points too (Who cares if they misspell the name in the liner notes, proving that had never actually been here until this very show?). This Toronto four-piece could easily win the title of Canada's best-band-with-the-least-recognition without even blinking and something tells me it wouldn't even bother them all that much. The show put on in the Dock on Thursday night definitely wouldn't work in an arena to a few thousand fans and still retain the intimacy needed to fully appreciate the dynamics of this group.

A near-packed house made this show thoroughly enjoyable (not that endlessly flowing draught and stale cigarette smoke do much for me) and the room made this band's sound come alive without being anywhere near the pain threshold, to which is something, I am almost ashamed to say after seeing countless shows, I am only now starting to pay attention. Rheostatics just wouldn't be anywhere as enjoyable at a million decibels. I say that only because these guys rule at playing with their own volume. They go from full compliment of noise to Martin Tielli's sweet vibrato solo vocal in record time and they do it so smoothly and effortlessly that you would swear they were pulling a Milli Vanilli. Being so proficient on their individual instruments and having a taste for the eclectic, their songs take all kinds of unexpected twists and turns, even after a hundred listenings. This proficiency also allows them to be creative vocally with two and three part harmonies for only a bar here and a few bars there being one of their many trademarks.

Another one of these is Martin Tielli's voice. Unusually nasal, it makes an interesting compliment to their songs. Without overshadowing Mark or Dave Bidini, the other two front people who are both vocally competent as well, Tielli's voice warms and enriches the music like no other in the group. Often when listening to their albums, I would wonder what all the songs would sound like if they had been sung by Tielli. After having seen them (finally!), I realise what a naive idea that was. Tielli's compliments the others and vice versa. I won't ever play amateur producer with their records again. I must have been temporarily insane. Maybe I've seen Videodrome one too many times.

They played a great variety of material from all of their records, something rarely seen these days and something always appreciated by fans from way back. 'Aliens' highlights Tielli's voice even though he really sings back up. 'Me and Stupid', 'Claire' and 'Introducing Happiness' all from the new album of the same name take you through only a small sample of their talents as songwriters and the moods on this new record. Makes a nice Christmas gift for that special someone that you offended by giving them cologne last year. You know, Post Offices nationwide would probably have a lot less bullet holes in them if the U.S. Mail Service just gave out Rheostatics albums with their pink slips. Okay, maybe free psychiatric visits and Rheostatics albums.

Rather than taking an intermission, which probably wouldn't have gone over that well given the band didn't start until almost midnight, the band instead played 'Red Meat, Beans and Rice' as they danced and sang about the room. As sincere as this little display seemed, it was only a clever ploy used to reach the bar in order to refill their mugs, the bastards. At least they got back on the stage and played for another half hour. Teasing the audience by promising to play all their requests, they, in fact, only played a handful. Time was against this crowd as there just wasn't enough of it to play for any longer. While seeing the four of them simultaneously play four different songs with vocals was indeed humorous, there were some promises broken and probably some fans milkily dis-

appointed. Some songs definitely missing in action that night were 'R.D.A.' and their cover of 'The Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald'. However, in no way did I walk away feeling cheated. Definitely the most entertainment I've had for \$5 since I went to see Gwar, only the Rheostatics didn't spray me with fake blood and violate all known laws against perverted sex while on stage. Although, Dave Bidini's offer of his underpants to anyone who had to come the show without any of their own comes pretty close.

A pleasant surprise was the opening act: The Inbreds. A duo of just bass and drums might have you thinking that these guys sounded thin and threadbare. Not so! Try to picture the lead bass player of Ned's Atomic Dustbin going solo, playing indie rock for campus audiences with only his faithful sidekick providing percussive accompaniment to help in his quest to convert the youth of North America into christian daredevils. Bungee jump for Jesus! This combo sounds really nifty, if nothing else. Having a bass player that plays with chords is something that fascinates me endlessly. Mike's vocals were pretty happening too. He's no slouch on the microphone and rides the capo up the neck of that sucker like nobody's business. Dave's drumming was straightforward with no frills, quite possibly being my only complaint about this group. Having the simplicity of only one instrument to colour the vocals makes me strain to hear something fancy, or at least creative, in the rhythmic structure of the songs. With The Inbreds, it's pretty much straight-ahead, plain old driving beat. This made me attentive for the entirety of their set hoping something really interesting might happen, but alas, the gimmick of being a two piece aside, they really are just an indie-rock band. Not to say they're bad, because they are not. The songs were nicely put together with lots of changes and they played and sang in a variety of tempos and keys (not an easy feat when limited to the dynamic range of a bass). However, the minimalism did not give way to the outpouring of musical genius that I (perhaps unfairly) was expecting. That being said, The Inbreds will be one band I hope to see again and are worth checking out.

## GENREKILDE MICHAEL EDWARDS

I noticed that the Globe and Mail had an article on how vinyl isn't dead in their Arts section this weekend, so now it must be official. They talk at length of the vinyl aesthetic, and of how it is 'cool' to collect records once more. But is this really a new thing? The market for vinyl has always been there, its just that it has taken three or four years for the major labels to realise that its still around. And that's why the new Pearl Jam album will be released on vinyl two weeks before it is on CD - simply for those people who love vinyl. And despite what the more cynical people out there may think, its not just a marketing ploy. No way. Definitely not.

The independent labels have never turned their backs on vinyl - many labels are still producing seven inch singles which will never be available elsewhere. And there vinyl has a much warmer sound than CD does - a sound where is a reminder of spent together. So, year, hang on to



your turntables just a bit longer although you probably should get rid of all those Bee Gees albums (which are real collector's items by now. Honest.)

After all that, you are probably wondering if I even bother buying CDs. Well, I do for a couple of reasons. First of all, because of availability. Finding a decent selection of music in town here is hard enough, so trying to find a decent selection on vinyl is downright impossible. Maybe this will change now that vinyl is so damned fashionable again, but until then the alternative to that is to use mail order. If you have ever tried to do this you will know that air-mail charges from Europe are hideous. So I buy CDs instead.

The other reason for buying CDs is to pick up the wonderful reissues that are coming out these days. Remember how in the early days 'they' told you how you would buy copies of your favourite albums on CD to replace your 'obsolete' vinyl? Well, I felt absolutely no compulsion to do that until companies like Rykodisc and Rhino began to reissue complete back catalogues of artists where they remastered the original tapes and added all manner of bonus tracks. Rykodisc in particular have been doing a fine job, initially working their way through the David Bowie albums and now doing the same for both Elvis Costello and the Undertones.

I am rapidly becoming an avid collector of these Elvis Costello discs. The wonderful presentation helps - sleeve notes provided by Elvis himself and literally dozens of extra songs in addition to the 'real' album. The latest one to be released is *Almost Blue*; his 'country' album. When it first came out in 1981, there was quite an interest in it because it contained no Costello compositions. Instead, he chose to cover twelve country songs which ranged from classic ('Sweet Dreams' and 'I'm Your Toy') to the more obscure ('Good Year For The Roses' and 'How Much I Lied'). It was such a dramatic departure from what he had been doing in the past that it didn't do very well commercially - people wanted more of those 'peppy' songs like 'Oliver's Army'. But seeing I was always one to laugh in the face of public opinion, I liked this one a lot - this was responsible for my initial curiosity in Gram Parsons, and I must always thank him for that.

The extra songs on *Almost Blue* make it a worthwhile investment, all eleven of them. There are five live tracks performed at a very low key gig in my native Aberdeen. One of the other tracks is the very disturbing 'Psycho' which has to be heard to be believed; its the sort of song that perpetuates the stereotype of country music being obsessed with morbid subject material. But the highlight is a second version of Gram Parsons' 'I'm Your Toy' recorded live with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra which makes a moving song even more so. Everyone should be buying these reissues; maybe a law should be passed to make it compulsory.

Sonic Youth have been enjoying all the benefits of a major label for quite a few years now (big comfy offices, fast cars, etc.), but they too have an impressive back catalogue which is filtering out on CD now. The latest two to arrive are *Evol* and *Sister*, both of which originally came out on SST Records before Sonic Youth was a household name. In the UK anyway, that didn't happen until 1988's *Daydream Nation* when they rapidly became the media darlings we all know them as today.

The music hasn't really dated at all, and I am almost tempted to say that these two sound better than anything that the band has put out this decade. I normally find Sonic Youth albums to be patchy affairs; flashes of lucidity and brilliance jump out from amidst the muddier experimental moments. And I can respect them simply for that - when they are good then there is no-one who can touch them. Considering that their peers at this time were people like the Swans and Lydia Lunch, Sonic Youth were light relief from the overwhelming darkness - scratchy guitars that ascended, descended and travelled in ways that no-one else contemplated. Sweetness came from Kim's vocals while Thurston did his own thing. Sure, it was just art rock gone awry but they did pave the way for so many of today's bands - a 19 year old Lou Barlow them letters singing the praises of *Sister*. This brace of albums offer such classic tracks as 'Cotton Crown', 'Schizophrenia' and 'Expressway To Yr Skull'; for those three reasons alone you should buy them. And then burn your Pearl Jam albums, even if they are on vinyl.