



ARTS & CULTURE

Can-Rock hits the Grawood

BY GREG MCFARLANE

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Our Lady Peace, I Mother Earth, The Headstones, and now, the Barstool Prophets.

The Barstool Prophets were anything but as they entertained a fair-sized Grawood crowd on Friday night. Under the glow of a Belvedere Cigarettes advertisement, the band showed little in the way of innovative music; choosing to re-hash everything prevalent in the Canadian rock scene.

The opening of their set was agreeable, and by the laid back nature of the audience, it felt as though this was going to be a relaxing evening of slightly rootsy, mid-tempo rock. The Prophets have a niche here, being able to play this type of music with a definite lure.

After that, however, the night was up-and-down.

The band next hauled out their Our Lady Peace-style fare, with everything from quick basslines to

the skyward gazes of lead vocalist Bobby Tamas. Raine Maida used to have the market cornered on looking just a little bit crazy on stage, but Tamas seems to be moving in.

It was all an act, though. Between songs, with his natural interactions with the crowd, Tamas seemed just like a regular guy. Also, bassist Glenn Forrester seemed normal enough, but a tad uncomfortable; possibly it had something to do with his flaming orange sweater or his forced, erratic attempts at 'grooving' to the tunes.

Next, the band tried their hand at some funk. While it was watered down by simple guitar melodies, it gave them five minutes of originality.

That five minutes was abruptly curbed by a cover of Prince's "When Doves Cry". Unlike Moist, which stays true to it's cover of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean", the Prophets do not play the correct music. They simply layer Prince's lyrics over their own tune. Now, playing a popular eighties hit in the middle of a set is undoubtedly a novelty (even if it has been done before), but a band must stay true to the music while making

the song their own, or else it is a disappointment.

Overall, the Barstool Prophets, as a band, are very proficient with their instruments, but they aren't very original. They seem to be having some sort of an identity crisis that has

caused them to fall in line with the plethora of bands this nation has to offer.

They didn't entice a huge reaction out of the docile crowd, and maybe that was because it wasn't motivated by what it had seen too many times before.

King's sings the blues

BY PATRICK SHAUNESSY

Last Saturday night, Big City Blues entertained as King's College held their annual fall semi-formal. Everyone came all decked out in their finest attire to dance, have a good time, and mostly to see the live performance of Carson Downey and Big City Blues. It was unusual having a live blues band play at a semi-formal, but still Big City pulled it off tremendously. All in all, the evening was incredible; no one left disappointed.

The Big City Blues band consists of three members: Carson Downey (Vocals, Guitar), his brother Murray (Drums), and Marlow Smiths (Bass). The band has been together for about 19 years, and in that time they have grown to become one of Atlantic Canada's biggest blues acts. They are all self-trained in their respective instruments, and have become quite skilled through practice and experience. Big City got their start in their home town of North Preston, Nova Scotia. Since then, they have toured all over the Atlantic provinces.

Before the band's formation, Carson Downey played with renowned blues musician Joe Murphy. While playing with Murphy, Downey recorded three albums. However, once he formed Big City, his recording career took a long hiatus.

Big City Blues have only

recently recorded an album, entitled *Big City*, the reason being that they find live performance far more satisfying. And they are definitely a great live act to see. Between last Saturday night's performance and their performances at Blues Corner over Halloween, Big City is one of the best live acts around. They have a true knack for feeding off the audience, judging precisely the mood and atmosphere of the crowd, and dazzling them with phenomenal solos. In this way they play the song they feel will best suit the moment: as Carson Downey put it, "If the mood is there, I just go with it."

The style of blues that Big City plays is one of their own creation, compiling various aspects of blues, rock and funk to create a grooving sound that breathes with soul. Much of their music is influenced by Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Jeff Healey on the blues side, and Parliament Funkadelic and Herbie Hancock on the funk side. While performing, they generally play a generous mix of original and cover tunes; thus every show is different, making Big City somewhat unpredictable.

The band is hoping to release another album some time in the near future, and if all goes well, they hope to do a cross-Canada tour.

Ruining Acid Jazz with style

BY RYAN LASH

Never judge a book by its cover and never judge a band by its demo tape.

Though any music lover will be able to tell you that the recorded side of a band differs greatly from its live equivalent, that fact becomes startlingly clear when one sits down to listen to *The Ruins*.

With a music style that can only lackingly be called acid jazz, this Japanese duo definitely offers much more to those that take the time to see them live; and to anyone that hasn't: too bad you missed your chance.

They played an all too short but highly energetic show to an appreciative crowd at the Market Street Jazz Cafe last Saturday night.

Through the course of their set they impressed the crowd with fast drums, screeching guitars and screaming vocals. Throw in a few lightning fast changes, and at times it was hard for this critic's untrained ears to separate the two performers. Not that a guitar sounds anything like a drum, but these two use their respective instruments to the fullest; creating a sound that changes faster than it can be described.



Halifax

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH: THE GRAWOOD LOUNGE

Wear a kilt, buy a beer, and talk in a cheesy Scottish accent about your cousin Roddy. **Highland Heights**, a local celtic band, has been gaining a strong audience recently, and they'll carry on that celtic tradition in this show at the Grawood. *It's not oatmeal!*

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH: CAFE OLE

This show is the last at the all-ages Barrington venue, and promises to host a variety of popular Halifax bands. Although the club plans to relocate, it should be a nostalgic show for many.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH: KING'S COLLEGE WARD ROOM

There is a Tribute to Bob Dylan at the Ward Room in support of his nomination for an Honorary Degree from Dalhousie University. There will be live music all night long with The Happy Gang. Proceeds from the event go to support the Dal Women's Centre.

UNTIL SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH: DALHOUSIE ARTS CENTRE

Dal Theatre stages its production of Arthur Miller's thought provoking play, *The Crucible*. This is undoubtedly one of the greatest plays written in the 20th century, and it should be interesting to see Dal Theatre's interpretation.

UNTIL SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH: NEPTUNE STUDIO STAGE

Eastern Front Theatre is staging its production of Louis Nowra's *Crow*, the struggle of an aboriginal trying to claim what is rightfully hers.

Crow fails to fly



BY MARK REYNOLDS

Independent theatre companies have a degree of artistic freedom that Dalhousie and Neptune mainstage productions lack. However, the Eastern Front theatre company squandered this chance to bring something vibrant and original to the theatre-going community of Halifax with its lacklustre production of Louis Nowra's *Crow*.

Crow, set in World War Two-era Australia, tells the story of a native woman's struggle to regain the tin mine that is rightfully hers. Her struggles are compounded by family problems, as well as the stresses of war and racism.

In a better production, the plot summary may have warranted more than one paragraph. However, Eastern Front's version of this play managed to remove all subtlety, depth, and character from what could have been a powerful production.

Which is not to say that the script itself is not ponderous to begin with. The play deals in stereotypes (the

strong, independent matriarch, the violent, power-mad military officer, the greedy and buffoonish chinese entrepreneur, et al) but in the right hands, the stereotypes could have been worked with some subtlety and humour.

Instead, the audience is presented with cardboard figures, moving stiffly about the stage, spouting lines that they cannot read with conviction because no personality has been developed to deliver them.

More embarrassing still are the acting and technical miscues that happened throughout the production. Actors consistently stumbled over their lines, and at one point the lights went down to end the scene while the actors were still talking.

Being amateur theatre excuses nothing here. I've seen high school productions done better, and without the patina of "social importance" that this *Crow* wears.

Eastern Front Theatre's production of the Australian Crow is playing at the new Neptune studio until November 30.