

Entertainment

Notes From Harbour Prison The Tragically Hip - The Odds - Change Of Heart

by Jon Bartlett

It's not often that you get to see any bands worthy of note around Fredericton, except for the handful of local talent that is daring enough to get up in front of a jeering crowd. And, once again we were ousted, this time, the Tragically Hip and friends decided to leave us out of the action, for a good reason I suppose. The Aitken Center stinks and they will never forget Remembrance Day '92, a day in which Gord and friends were nothing short of angstful. Or maybe it's because it costs many more loonies than anyone in town is willing to risk to book them, now that the Hipsters have achieved international stardom. Needless to say, good ole Freddy Beach needs a good arena-type venue, and they need it now.

In spite of the pain we Frederictonians suffer, me and some friends made the trek to Saint John this past Friday, as did many others. I had never been to Harbour Station, and anticipated a new arena-corporate rock experience. As I entered, I was anything but disappointed; the place looked promising. Then I looked at the floor and noticed something I had never seen before and never want to see again...TWO BARRICADES! Maybe I've been going to different concerts than everyone else all my life, but I have never seen two barricades set up on the floor of an arena concert. It was awful. One was set up in the usual spot, about 8 or 10 feet from the stage; the other about 80-100 feet out (I'm not much for approximations). Even worse, you had to be in possession of a floor ticket to even get to the back area of the floor; truly more like Harbour Prison. It was no secret though, that back floor status was easy to attain, and by night's end the crowd thickened. My valiant attempt at leaping the back barricade ended in a floor scuffle as I was told where to go, and not politely, by a scrawny security guard about half my size but twice my coolness.

In the usual fashion, most people wanted to see Gord on stage for 4 hours, then go home and dream of tornadoes and body convulsions. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case. TWO WHOLE BANDS had the gall to get in the way of everybody's Hip-loving experience! Amongst gum-chewing, hand-holding high school prodigies, I awaited my fave Canadian band, Change of Heart. This quartet is out of Toronto and, in different forms, has been a pulsing rawk



force since 1982. Honest! Even older than the Hip (and...<gulp>...better too), led by sleepy-eyed guitar genius Ian Blurton, this band will capture the hearts of all young rawkers by, say, the end of the year. COH blasted into their set with What My Paws Can Move and didn't turn back, although some hecklers cried for Gordie. If you've never seen this band perform live, you can only imagine what kind of sonic energy they bring to the stage. All four members contribute equally to the coup de force that is Change of Heart. I almost want to compare them to the Beastie Boys in terms of stage energy and presence, but I can feel the insults being hurled on

me already. For now I'll say they're close, and soon to take over the world we love and know as rawk.

COH's set was short but sweet, and focused on gems from the new release Tummiesuckle and 1993's Smile. They were the recipients of the \$100,000 CFNY New Music Search prize for 1994, and the band recently signed with Lunamothe (Virgin outside of Canada). Tummiesuckle hits stores today; buy it I prithee.

After the slammin' COH set, and a short wait, the Odds came up to bat against the Gord worshippers. Personally, I'd have to say that they received a more favorable

crowd response than Change of Heart, mostly due to the fact that the crowd had doubled by the time the Odds started. This Vancouver-based band has been a college favorite over the past couple of years. In a somewhat odd move, they began the set with their new hit single Truth Untold. This succeeded in warming up the Prison and loosening up attitudes. The Odds have developed a really full

"For us, the songs are continuously evolving. Months of adding and subtracting will determine if a song is good enough to stand on it's own."

Gord Sinclair

sound and stand out as one of the great Canadian bands of the past few years. They also delivered with crowd favorites Heterosexual Man and Wendy Under The Stars, both having been videos with occasional MuchMusic video play. Their new album was released on the 31st and is entitled Good Weird Feeling. It's a decent record but doesn't really capture the live feeling that is so important in the Odds' chemistry.

When the Odds set was completed, and a period of waiting time had elapsed, the lights dimmed once again and the video screen was set for action. I really wished that the screen would have

been used for the other two bands - they could have shown old Spiderman clips or Care Bears shows or a Dirty Harry movie, or even in-between sets. But the Hip were not to be overshadowed by their predecessors, and there was to be no lending of their video screen.

As the Hip boarded the stage, I could not help but be reminded of the last time I'd seen them. Unlike most rock/alternative bands, the members of the Tragically Hip seem to rarely change their appearance; I really admire this. Gord Downey still looked like the gentleman that he is (this time he was clad in a snazzy red shirt with beige pants...now that's class!), Bobby Baker still looked like an honorary member of Warrant or Slayer, Paul Langlois still looks like Jimmy

Page...etc. Downey's voice instantly entranced the Hipsters, as he announced that he was fabulously rich in the opening lines of Grace, Too. This tune is really growing on me, and was a great opener even though screams surrounded me. More than once during the opening moments of the song I heard whispers to the tune of "...and he's cute too..." Hey girl, go see Moist-they're a really pretty band!

The set shuffled in a great mix of stuff from the songbag. New material featured from the latest album Day For Night included the single Greasy Jungle, the mysteri-

ous Titanic Terrarium and Nautical Disaster, a song in which great usage was made of the video screen in the form of tornado images sweeping across fields. Sooo Hip. Classic tunes like New Orleans Is Sinking and Little Bones had many a drunk rambling along. The night also brought out recent favorites like 50 Mission Cap and At the Hundredth Meridian to keep the crowd counting.

Not to be a softie or anything, but what the Hip does best, are ballads. You can say that they rock and all that, but when it boils down to it, most faster Hip songs sound the same. If all I wanted was rawk, I'd have left after Change of Heart, they were the rock band. But back to my point (unobnoxiously, I hope), the highlights of the evening were two beautiful ballads. Last of the Unplucked Gems is one of the Tragically Hip's best tunes, and it was even better in person. Scared also sent chills up my spine, even to the point of eliciting a little fear.

The show also provided a few surprises, as is customary with the Hip. Among them was the white t-shirt guy episode. After the opening lines of a song (Nautical Disaster or Titanic Terrarium I think), Gord Downey burst into a yelling fit. The nature of this commotion was some white t-shirt guy near the front who was allegedly (great overused word) picking a fight with somebody. Instantly, the crowd halted all movement as Downey yelled and swore at the evil one. I'll bet the white t-shirt guy felt dumb afterwards. He'll never fight again, Gordie changes lives.

Long after that little scandal, the night was rounded up with a great encore. Locked In The Trunk Of A Car is probably my favorite Tragically Hip single, and I really liked hearing it live again. It's an eerie number, but really moving, in some weird way. This was followed by Daredevil and a super-extended version of Where With All, complete with major guitar solo a la Baker, and a good one too.

The night proved a good one. I could whine another page about how stupid the security system was, how today's youth are being repressed, and how we gotta fight for our right to party...but like the good bald-headed security guard himself said, "It's for safety reasons". I didn't pay \$27 to be safe mister. I came to see a show. But behind barricades I remained.