



PHOTO: IAN MARDON

a community centre Co-op bookstore

Big Fish in the Pond

by David Deaton

A spectre is haunting Halifax. It is the spectre of Red Herring Co-op Books. "Red Herring", as it is affection-

ately called by its patrons and members, is the only book co-operative in the Atlantic region and one of the very few left in Canada.

"Who ever would've thought

we'd last this long?" chortles its newsletter. This November, Red Herring will be celebrating its first decade in Halifax. Despite several moves and its inevitable location in a conservative back-

water, Red Herring has become an ever-bigger fish in the pond.

It is grisly to recall what Halifax was like before the advent of Red Herring. Back then, there were all of two book nooks downtown. University bookstores were as deficient in their inventories as they were exorbitant in their prices. (Some things never change.)

People, especially in the academic and political communities, yearned for an outlet that would provide alternative reading. Eventually, thirty of them got together and Red Herring was spawned.

No bookstore in Toronto can boast of such an eclectic selection. Here are just some of its amply stocked subjects: Feminist fiction and theory, International Politics, Ecology, Psychology, Parenting, and Penguin Classics.

Also on sale are the collected works of Matt Groening, whose *School is Hell* text could be the most relevant book some people read all year. What Red herring does not have in stock may very well be ordered for you. Ask nicely.

Name notwithstanding, Red Herring Co-op Books sells more than reading material. Non-

literary merchandise includes postcards, calendars, protest buttons, t-shirts, offbeat music, and Nicaraguan coffee. Great for Christmas shopping.

Red Herring has come to be as much of a community centre as it is a cultural emporium. A bulletin board just inside the front door informs one of social happenings, and even functions as a small classifieds section.

The book co-op has an "outreach" program that extends throughout the province. Its booktables appear at special events and conference, such as last month's Nova Scotia NDP Convention and last week's South African Conference.

The best thing about Red Herring Co-op Books is that you can become a part of it. All you have to do is contribute some time, usually in the form of a three-hour shift. No experience is necessary, only an interest in progressive bookstores. "Ability to read an asset."

Whether curiosity or conviction washes you in its direction, Red Herring welcomes you with open arms. Come visit Halifax's latest landmark! You have nothing to lose but your change. *Red Herring Co-op Books, 1555 Granville Street. 10-6 Mon-Wed, Sat; 10-9 Thur-Fri.*

Lee Aaron visits the moon!

by Scott Neily

Lee Aaron, Canada's Queen of Rock & Roll, played four dates last week at the Misty Moon on Barrington Street. Supporting her self-titled fourth album, this was Lee's first visit to Halifax in three years. Blaming scheduling as the main gremlin in the long delay, Lee hinted that the next tour would not only be sooner, but bigger and better as well.

Even with visions of greater things to come, her recent shows were no small affairs. Misty Moon manager Geoff Palmeter was kept busy at the door, checking the IDs of the hundreds who came to rock hard with Her Royal Loudness. The Moon has always been known to attract a variety of patrons, and this fact was most evident at the Saturday night show, the biggest of the week. With attendees ranging from leather-clad metalheads to preppies to executives in three-piece suits, the atmosphere had a cosmopolitan feel to it. However, the purpose common to all was to hear lovely Lee sing her heart out.

And that she did. Although her new album has been dismissed by some as a commercial sell-out, by the end of her opening number, she left no doubt in the minds of all that her years of experience as the "Metal Queen" were not wasted. While her

music has taken a turn for the melodic with the addition of keyboards, her talent for performing heavy rock & roll remains razor-sharp.

Her back-up band also played exceptionally well, especially guitarist John Albani and bassist Chris Brockway. This was a feat in itself, as the band had had only three days of rehearsals before the tour. Due to a logistical mix-up, album keyboardist Jimi Gelcer and percussionist Randy Cooke suddenly became unavailable. Left in a precarious position, John quickly called in ex-Saga members Jim Gilmour on keys and Steve Negus on drums. Although a slightly ragged start on Wednesday night led to occasional glances at sheet music, the band quickly gelled together for a great series of hard-rockin' tunes.

While her new album is getting a lot of radio airplay, Lee stresses that she "definitely had no conscious effort to make it lighter or more commercial". With more time for writing, "nine months as opposed to the three or four which we usually get", Lee said of the contents of her new album, "They're better songs. There was more thought and time put into the writing. The production was slicker and more sophisticated than in any of my other albums. But, hey! We're still 100 per cent rock and

roll!"

While she has yet to secure an American release, Lee says she is not desperate. "No, I'm doing enough in the rest of the world to not be desperate. I'm waiting for the right deal. I mean, I've been doing this long enough — it's not like it's my first album and I'm dying for a record deal. We're going to wait 'til the fifth album."

When asked about her growing vocal and songwriting skills, Lee replied, "I used to think that you had to sing full-out all the time. The important thing Peter Coleman (her producer) taught me on this album vocally was that's not really what makes you a great singer. Being a great singer is being able to sing soft and dynamic, control your voice when you need to and sing out when it's the right time. As far as writing more melodic material, I think that's all part of the process of becoming a better, more experienced, more mature songwriter. And if that seems to be the way our music is progressing, I can't see it changing. I mean, hey! I'm always going to be playing rock & roll music. But there's good rock and there's bad rock. To me, the good music is the type that is melodic, and is the kind of song that you can hear a couple of times and be singing along with. That's a great song."

Long a major star in Europe,

Lee has now achieved equivalent success in Canada. With her new album about to go gold, and her recent win of Best Female Vocal-

ist at the Toronto Music Awards, Lee's star is rising fast and growing brighter every moment.

