

very rough and was actually hurting a lot of kids. In a scene that reminded me of the ants dragging off a tarantula from a Walt Disney film he was soon to be swarmed over by his potential victims and given a stiff talking to. 'I just want to thrash!!' el Boz says innocently. 'Everyone wants to thrash man, but nobody wants to be killed!' replies Nick Oliver, providing one of the more important speeches of the evening.

SATURDAY

Dresden 45 play the sort of music that I love to listen to at home with all the lights turned off except for some flashing police beacons strategically placed behind scattered potted ferns. Generically, categorists refer to Steve and James' band of nerve-tingling post-holocaust dread 'Death Rock', but I think this is a rather unfortunate term. I was unlucky enough to arrive late in the set, but even so, the two songs that I did catch, fit the barren industrial wasteland of the gargantuan cow shed called the Capital Exhibit Centre perfectly. Swaths of moody bass-drone washed over nail gun electronic percussion that gave a wonderful cinematic ambience to James' distorted scorched-messiah vocalization. All Good Children crept on to the stage next and this combo were undoubtedly the nice boys of the evening. At times 'nice' is not a derogatory term if it is associated with a certain zing and warmth, but unfortunately these qualities were in short supply at the hands of the 'Children'. Most of the songs ended rather limply just like a wet fart, keeping the obviously unimpressed audience rooted to the spot. But the audience may as well not have been there since there was absolutely nothing to be gained by watching the band in the first place. They were as exciting as watching a plank warp.

One of the weekend's biggest treats hailed by the name of Kearney Lake Road. A quick reference to the programme describes them as being able to provide 'an unique melt down of hard core, jazz and rock'. This seemed like a rather strange proposition, but under the circumstances it fit the band perfectly. Every single song in the set by this excellent young band is a multifaceted jewel that jumps twists and turns in mid-air, only to land and sprint across the stage with a series of blood curdling stops and changes. This approach is so brilliantly executed, that I found myself continually catching my breath with excitement. All of this wondrous tangle is played on bass, lead-guitar and drum by a trio that already have their own distinctive look, namely a weird sheep-dog mop-top haircut that completely obscures the faces of the boys on the axe. With the right prodding and sensitive management Kearney Lake Road from Halifax will be BIG BIG BIG. Believe me.

Still on a high note, the evenings entertainment was to continue with 100 flowers also from Halifax. The Flowers appear to inhabit the nether-world between bright bouncy pop and hard-assed garage-loud rock, and very comfortable they seem to be there too. Once again it is always very exciting to be able to receive the impression that one is having the opportunity to witness a band that is so obviously destined for a significant future and 100 flowers, with an album out soon on DTK records, are just such a band.

It was to be the turn of growing icons The Strait Jackets next, but not before a lengthy series of technical hitches (which the Jackoes seemed to strangely enjoy no end) were given their due. This pause in continuity was to provide me with an indication of just how good this band is. Without sounding pretentious, even while the band generally mucked about and musically ad-libbed, an excited buzz was going through the audience as they became aware of the fact that the Strait Jackets meant business. And they did.

Up to a point this was a very powerful set with most of the album 'Are You Crazy' getting a good airing. This included my own personal favorites 'Capital I, and 'Elevator' which sounded far far better here with the depth of sound that was sadly lacking in the production of the album. Something decidedly detrimental started happening however during the last third of the set which up until that point had been virtually flawless. This appeared to begin with one of several really stodgy Black Sabbath covers which, in all honesty, should have been omitted completely; this garbage serving only to taint the sharp and refreshing original numbers heard earlier. Whereas the first part of the set saw me bouncing up and down with unbridled enthusiasm, by the end of the performance I had sidled over to the side of the Cow Shed and insolently propped up one of the walls. They were in fact becoming very self indulgent and rather too impressed with themselves, including the singer that as yet delivered little stage presence but now demonstrated a desperate willingness to be like someone else. The last thing I want to do however is draw any light away from this exceptional band that, if there is a God, will be playing on campus a satisfactory number of times in the coming year. But, for th' love of Pete, drop the Sabs - PLEASE!

The evenings headliners were The Nils from Montreal, an energetic unit that provides tight irreverent rock n' roll and yet seem destined to remain in limbo between major league success and independent obscurity. The Nils certainly didn't start out on the right foot having fallen slightly foul of the city's wonderful liquor laws, on a result of which a modest amount of alcohol had been confiscated. This incident was to provide a lot of material far between song banter that became admittedly irritating after the third time. It was not to be the Nils evening as their performance highlighted an escalating set of problems at the mixing deck with most

of the numbers spending at least five seconds before any vocals were allowed out of the sound system. Then too came an increasing despondency with the audience that failed to show any real enthusiasm toward the band despite a series of leaps, bounds and pouts from the bassist that betrayed an allegiance to the Clash rock n' roll rebel guide-book. I'm actually very fond of the Nils it was decidedly unfortunate that we were getting to grips with the band on a rather bad night. Getting more and more fed-up with the somewhat apathetic audience the set climaxed with a bit of 'lets-trash-the-stage-a-bit' Who type rock and roll craziness. But to no avail, the kids were rooted to the spot. 'We'll pay for it' was the first thing the Nils were heard to say as they sadly left the stage.

SUNDAY

The Lord's day was to pay homage to some of the weekend's louder fraternity, in particular various manifestations of the metallic genre. Local moshers K.G. Wolfe doubt that the band lack little in terms of being a tight combat unit. This is my metal: the experience ranging from seeping perulant grunge to sharp ear-ripping mayhem. Where this bunch falls down, apart from an apparent obligation to sound pretty dumb with a stream of expletives between songs, is the fact that the vocals (especially the harmonies, are flat and lifeless. Even Johnny Rotten sought professional vocal training to enhance delivery and this sort of education would not go unwasted on several other bands seen this weekend.

Adrenalyn, without making any bones about it sound rather messy and left no real impression on me whatsoever except to be reminded what it might be like to wade through a swamp of radioactive cement inhabited by noisy mutoid piranhas. It is true, as I heard said, that after being exposed to

countless hours of such musical fare one is hard pressed to detect any tangible difference between one routine metal band and another unless a trace of individuality provides some form of redeeming value. Adrenalyn certainly don't make this problem any easier.

First-timers Holy Order also from Fredericton start off their set with Metallica's standard 'Master', a reasonably well executed cover but again nothing really worth writing home to Satan about. And so the rather stagnant air was to continue with a mostly covers performance that once again summoned up images of being unceremoniously dumped in something hideously thick and viscous, that and putting on a suit of armour and throwing ones self down the stair with only a giant hornets nest in a pickle jar for company. To be fair they are neophytes and this was an credible performance but if anything that I could say would be of any significance, I would seriously suggest the development of a style that allows the band to stand out a little more prominently from a crowd of individuals that basically have the same idea.

Neighbourhood Watch border on excellent. Most of us would shake our heads at the notion of melody and structure in thrashcore, but Neighbourhood Watch are quite capable of this bizarre concept. Rather than the sloppy miasma of whale noise that so often characterizes many bands of this ilk, Grant Forsythe and his crew produce a very memorable performance with el Granto proving to be a very entertaining stage spectacle, allowing frontline troops at the foot of the stage

to participate on the microphone with perfect timing that it was almost as if he had his own pocket choir. Even more endearing is that the band are polite and eloquent and are obviously very proficient at their trade. Neighbourhood Watch deserve at least a substantial following and I offer them every encouragement to continue what must be a promising career.

Scapegoat, darlings of the Saint John herbert scene are up next and thankfully show us that good honest gonad-expanding noise can be generated without the need to look like members of Spinal Tap. The stage show consists entirely of a brat-next-door look-a-like pogoing about the stage in sub-epileptic frenzy. Meanwhile the unlikely spectacle of a young lady looking for all the world as

if she has just finished the days work at the library whallops away at the bass but stays completely still. At this stage of the weekend what can you expect but that most of the audience is standing or sitting. The frontman gets a bit upset about this but no manner of beratement will shift them. Most of them are actually casualties from the Metallica concert held in Moncton on the previous evening.

Lizard from Saint John have the ominous task of rounding off the evening and indeed the entire festival but they do it rather nicely. Lizard emulate some of the better aspects of the thrash-metal contingent without losing

the ability to retain their own particular style which is a generally wicked sense of fun and an attitude of 'to-hell-with-the-situation-lets-rip-their-heads-off! Or something like that. And of course anyone that likes Public Enemy is alright by me, this latter observation alone suggesting that Lizard are a far more worldly band than some others I could mention: having no truck with Satan, mystical symbols and blind delusion of one band in particular. What's more they all seem to be having a damn good time - isn't this one of the most important means of communication between a band and its punters?

As an overall event the Maritime Independent Music Festival was a success. It gave those of us with any commitment to being able to hear the real music -- the music from the hearts and souls of today's generation -- the opportunity to hear twenty-five examples of local talent in the space of one weekend. As a financial success however it was not. On Sunday I had the dubious honor of being interviewed by Cable 10 on the occasion, and the rant I went into then could quite easily be used now. This is the question -- why is it that people in this part of the country are so willing to use music as a disposable commodity having the same importance as a biodegradable shopping bag? Time and again I have heard of bands necessarily succumbing to the malaise of TOP-40 cover material simply because of the wishes of the reptiles that run all the potential venues. This in turn has lead people to become intimidated and unresponsive of any new and innovative approaches to the medium and as a result, it is just this sort of mindset that lead to a poor attendance this past weekend. But what horrified me the most was the pathetic turnout

from the University itself. here we have around 7,000 bright young minds supposedly willing to absorb all kinds of ideas and perspectives, all forms of information and entertainment available to them. But where were they? I would say that as a conservative estimate there can only have been about thirty people from the University at the event and most of these were associated with the event anyway. This rather disgusted me.

Peter Rowan and Dawn-Aeron Wason, however, deserve a medal. Even in the face of such appalling lack of interest they resolutely continue to encourage bands to play in this cultural wasteland and on that consideration alone their commitments are heroic.

Next year, we are told in no uncertain terms, campus entertainment will have a 'bold new approach'. Admittedly it won't have to succeed with any great flourish to surpass last year's fiasco of mediocrity but we may yet have a chance to see a lively and energetic campus scene that wholeheartedly supports any number of the bands that could have been seen at this weekend's festival. Let's see some action.



In A Suddenly Spectacular Lapse of Character Lizard Break Into Sinatra's New York New York (cutline courtesy Tim Judah)