

Talking with a band on the brink

by James Covey

Newfoundland power rock trio Hardship Post have made a major impact on Halifax's nascent alternative music scene. Their "Sugarane" single has been a local favourite, and their tight performance opening for Sloan at the McInnes Room October 3 turned heads — in fact, their debut EP cassette *Mood Ring* is back on top of Sam the Record Man's local independent music sales chart. Now they are poised to take on a bigger chunk of the continent.

Recently they did a recording session for the CBC's *Braves New Waves* which will probably find its way to a new single. They have a song on a flexidisc to be published in *National Chart* magazine, and are set to record a single for Sub Pop with hot producer Brad Wood (Liz Phair). Their new *Hack* EP is about to be released on Sloan's Murderecord label and distributed nationally by MCA. As if that were not enough, they will be releasing a split single with Randy Bachman featuring the artists performing a couple of each other's songs (seriously).

On November 3rd, Hardship Post will play the CMJ seminar in New York, as will Sloan, Eric's Trip, jale, Thrush Hermit, and Bubaiskull (catch them with the latter three bands this weekend at the Double Deuce — contribute to the cost of their trip!). I talked with lead singer/guitarist Sebastian Lippa about their music, his lyrics, and the growing Halifax music scene.

JC: So when people ask you what sort of music that you do, what do you tell them? I mean, do you ever say the g-word, or...

SL: Sometimes I wish we'd said the g-word a bit more often because usually what we say instead is completely stupid. Like — no, never mind, I won't even repeat it... I don't know what kind of music we play, because it's changing. Who knows, by our next record it might even be — folk.

JC: I think that it's interesting that "Under the Influence of Meat Puppets II" is...

SL: It's country! (laughs)

JC: It's so different than anything else you're doing in your set right now, but it's also very good, you know, which means, to me, that you could go in a bunch of different directions right now.

SL: And that's the thing. That's what is interesting, you know?

JC: Is it interesting/scary?

SL: No, not at all. It was scary when I felt like we were getting pigeonholed. That was frightening. Because when we started, I just wanted to rock, you know, that was the only thing I cared about. I just wanted to rock... Now I don't feel that way anymore. That gets so boring. I'm much

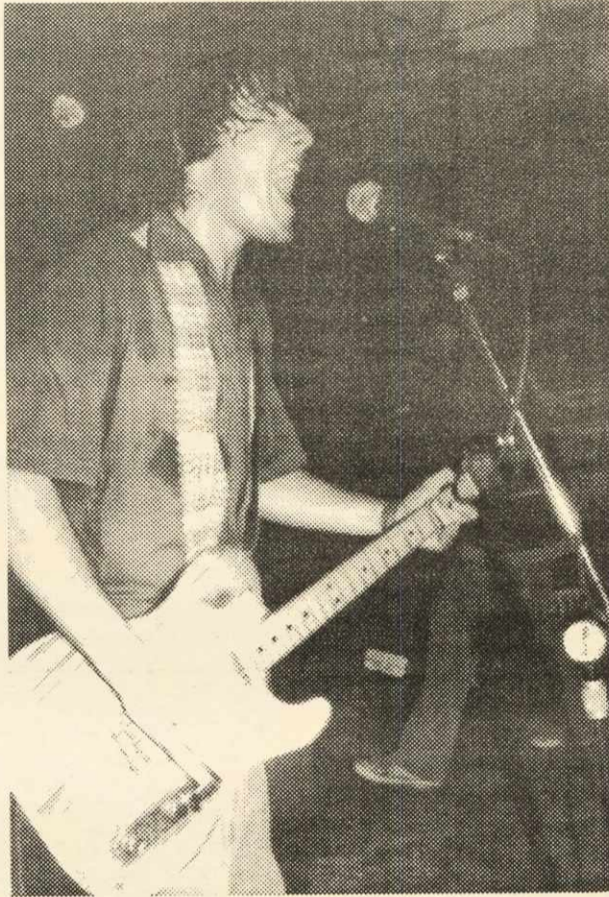


PHOTO: JON SCHEDEWITZ

more into dynamics. You know, you can appreciate a rocking tune way more if it comes after a slow song. It's just way more interesting to listen to and to watch... It's almost like a type of maturity, to be able to get up on stage in front of a whole bunch of people, and play quietly. That takes balls, in my opinion.

JC: Even on *Mood Ring*, even though the songs really rock, the lyrics are really vulnerable. Is that conscious?

SL: No. That's just the lyrics that come to me. Yeah, that's not an attempt at anything. That's just natural.

JC: There's kind of a punk side to the band, I guess, but when I listen to *Mood Ring*, you're not screaming I hate this or that...

SL: No, 'cause I don't. That's not the type of person I am.

JC: It seems really very introspective and even self-critical on a song like "Sharp Teeth".

SL: Right.

JC: I wanted to ask you about "Tables and Chairs Upsidedown", because I always wanted to know exactly what those lyrics meant — or do they have an exact meaning for you?

SL: They don't really have an exact meaning. Well, not one that I can say is an exact story about something... The lyrics are a bit dreamlike, where they don't make complete sense — like "finding a bag of bottlecaps". I make a lot of references to things I did as a kid — like I collected bottlecaps as a kid, and I had a bag of bottlecaps, and I ended up burying them, kind of like buried treasure, and then I'd dig them up later — that was

my idea. Or having someone following me, or trying to find me, and me going around leaving kind of clues or cryptic symbols, like painting — leaving a sign with paint and words like a map, like "ten by ten on a wall". So that, kind of like, leaving hints behind for someone to find me, or something like that. You know, again, it's not something that would really happen — it's, you know, something you might imagine in a dream or something like that... I don't really like obvious lyrics. Sometimes I do. Like Eric's Trip's lyrics can be pretty obvious sometimes, but they're just so emotionally raw, that it just, it really draws you in. You can't help being moved by the words... My criteria is,

I'm usually just trying to make music and lyrics that I would want to listen to.

JC: I wasn't going to ask much about what you think of the whole "Halifax phenomenon" that they're talking about, 'cause, I don't know, from here it just seems like a lot of talk...

SL: No, it's not, really, it's not. I think that for anyone around here to say that is really selling the town short because there's a really good thing going here. We'll say for now the Atlantics, I guess. Because, I mean, Eric's Trip are a big part of what's happening, and they're not from here. I like to think that we're part of it, too, a little bit, and we're not full-blown Halifax people — well, we're not Halifax people at all, I just happen to be living here right now. But um, there's a really good thing going here, and I'm not saying that for any other reason than because I think it's true. You know? There's a lot of really good people... really key people, in all areas. Like up at the radio station, up at CKDU, there's really cool people who've got best intentions for the local scene at heart, and do their job well. You've got people like with Cinnamon Toast, Murderecord — I mean, there's record companies for people to put out music that are good at what they do, and committed to the music. And then you've got all the people in bands — you know, so many talented people... Everyone's very supportive of each other. All the bands, and all the people behind the bands. Everyone's kinda got their own agenda, and they go about their own business, and they work on their own stuff, and try to get better and better on their own, and the success of others doesn't make anybody mad or anything. Everyone's really happy for other people's success. You know, if someone does well, it's like, hey, that's great. And everyone just keeps doing what they do. I think that's so cool.

Slipped Discs

by Richard Lim

This British quartet could be the next big thing to come out of Europe. But I doubt it. The music is fun, but it doesn't grow on you. Rather, it wears on you.

Sounding something like Color Me Badd with funny accents, East 17's album begins with great promise. The opening track, "House of Love" is a hip-hop romp, and "Deep" provides some suggestive humour with such lines as, "I'll butter the toast if you lick the

Walthamstow
East 17
London Records

knife." However, tracks such as, "I Disagree" and "Gotta Do Something" are nothing special. They'd play well in a dance bar where one song is indistinguishable from the next, but unfortunately, I was sitting in a chair completely sober while listening.

Typical of many dance-type albums these days, *Walthamstow* comes complete with remixes of three of the songs, "Gold", "Deep" and "Slow It Down". What can I say? They're nice, they're bouncy, they're danceable, they must be remixes! Now that I know that, what do I do?

Overall, I'd have to admit that the biggest problem with East 17's music is not so simple as the sound-alike rhythm sections from song to song, nor is it the rough yet somehow harmonious background voices. Unfortunately, the band's biggest handicap proves to be the lead singer's voice. It's not a bad voice, it's just a voice with limited appeal. From song to song, regardless of lyrical content or mood, the lead vocals remain in that strange land between rapping and chant-singing. The lead singer comes across so emotionally cool, whether the song has the

potential to be passionate or tongue-in-cheek, he ends up sounding smarmy and precious. But then, it's his voice, and if you like it, buy the album.

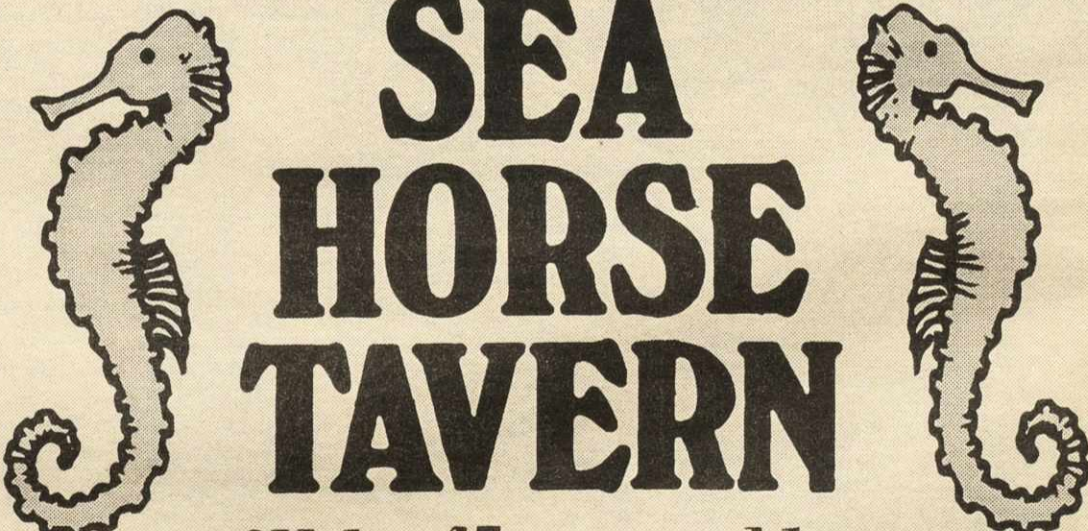
Bloody Kisses
Type O Negative
Roadrunner Records

Perhaps the most unnerving development in the music industry today is the creation of music that can be repulsive and entertaining at the same time. You may find the vocals incomprehensible, the music noisy or talentless, but you can still have fun listening to it. At least, that's how I feel about groups such as Type O Negative.

Their new track, titled "Machine Screw", consists mostly of industrial sounds — industrial machinery, not music — and a woman moaning. Cheap thrill, boys.

Once you accept that these guys are using cheese graters in place of guitar picks and ballpeen hammers in place of drumsticks, other songs begin to sound cool. In particular, "Set Me On Fire", "Kill All the White People" (these guys are all Caucasians, by the way) and "Christian Woman", which suggests a psychosexual relationship between a woman and her deity. Not exactly comfortable to listen to when you have a Judeo-Christian background, but the music, dammit, the music!

So the lead singer has one of those guttural, funeral voices similar to Andrew Eldritch's (of Sisters of Mercy), the kind which non-singers are born with and are somehow able to elevate to a musical level. The music is a pleasant sort of chaos of crashing smashing guitars and angry ominous rhythm sounds. Key selling point: There's a song called, "Fay Wray Come Out and Play"!



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