

## Escort service

By SAMANTHA BRENNAN

SO FEW WOMEN ARE USING Dalhousie's escort service that one of its three nightly shifts has been dropped.

Escort service co-ordinator Peter Jarvis says only two women have used the 9pm. shift in the past month.

Although successful in its first year of operation, Jarvis says only a handful of women have used the service this term. The service began in 1982 to protect women students walking home from the library to the women's residence at night.

In February, the 45 male volunteers who staff the service have accompanied 13 women to Shirreff Hall.

"If fewer and fewer people use the service it will be recommended that it be dropped," he says.

For now though, the escort service will continue to offer nightly runs to the women's residence from both the Killam and MacDonald libraries.

At the University of Toronto students are beginning to question the value of their escort service, in the wake of an increase of reported sexual assaults on campus.

"(Escort services) are a perpetuation of the problem," says Ingrid MacDonald, a student who writes for the campus feminist newspaper, *OtherWise*.

"Women should start thinking in terms of protecting themselves. We must empower ourselves to be protectors," she said.

The university's Victoria College escort service, started in 1983 by the student council and revived last fall after an attack on a female student near the campus, employs both men and women as escorts. MacDonald says this practice places women who use the service in danger.

"Villain and the protector are the same," she says.

Lois Fine of Toronto's rape crisis centre says the Victoria College escort service is likely not used much by women because they are reticent to be accompanied home by men. The service in 1983 was virtually a failure.

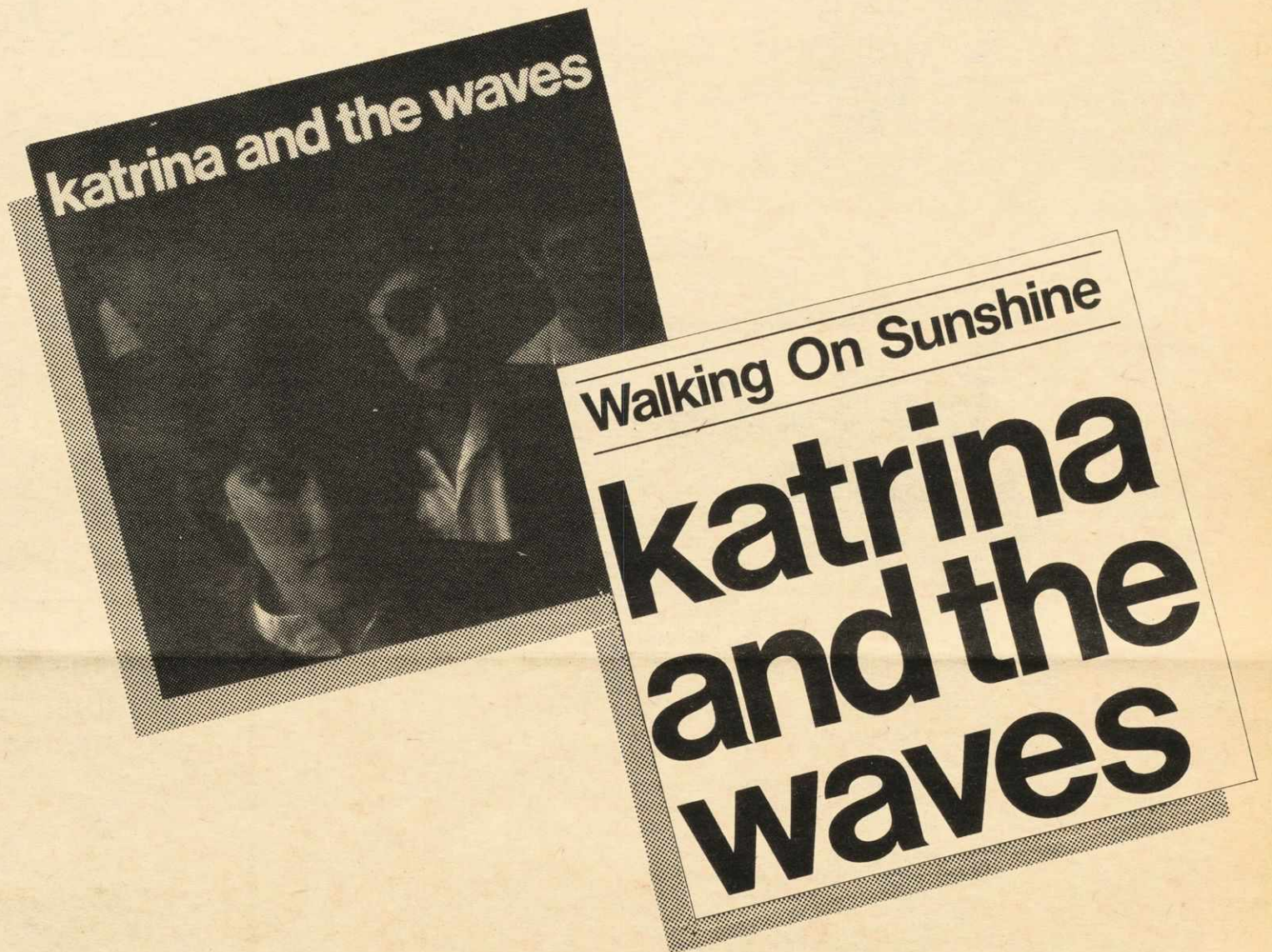
"A lot of women would feel safer if the escort was a woman. Women are often more frightened if it's a man they don't know. An escort service should be run by women."

Jarvis says this is not the case at Dalhousie. He says the women from Shirreff were asked if they'd prefer to have both male and female escorts and they said no.

Escort services have recently been set up at the University of Waterloo, Carleton University in Ottawa and Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. McMaster University in Hamilton and the University of Western Ontario in London both offer drive home services for students at night.

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