

Rock and Sole

Room in the lifeboat set sail into music's future, leaving awestruck critics and a lot of dead fish in their wake.

So far the 1980's have been a steady rush of one short-lived faddish musical style after another. Reggae and rockabilly ran past us at the speed of repetitive albeit rhythmic sound. Juju music jumped into our lives only to jump out again. Electropop fizzled and countless new waves have broken upon our shores leaving nothing behind but sand shells. None of these has had the staying power, the exact combination of a distinctive sound and the unlimited room to explore the depths of an artistic voice that could make it the music of a new generation, the way the simple synthesis of the blues and hillbilly music that we now call rock and roll became the music of the 50s and the 60s.

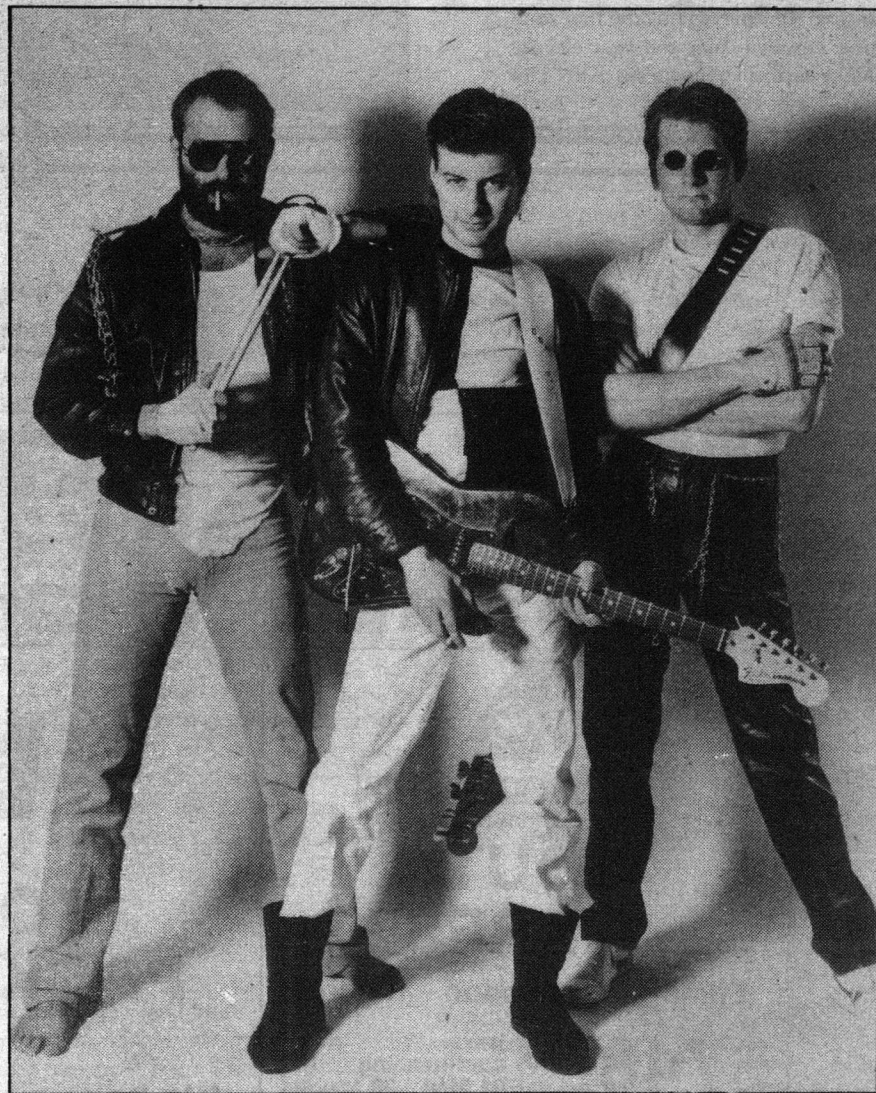
Until now.

A band has finally come along with the energy to uproot the dead, rotting stumps of today's popular music and the vision to plant anew the seeds of the future. Like rock and roll, their music reaches back to its own roots to combine two cultures into one. Whereas rock and roll combined white and black, their music combines old and new, rural and urban. Like so many of the most insightful commentators on American culture, they come from Canada (Marshall McLuhan, John Kenneth Galbraith, the original cast of Saturday Night Live). The band's name is Room in the Lifeboat. Their music is Maritime punk.

"We came to Toronto from Cape Breton and got into the punk scene there, and, well, there was just no excitement to it," remembers Room in the Lifeboat's lead singer Slasher McDougal. "I mean really, night after night, singing about the nuclear holocaust and puking on our audience - what did it all mean? And more importantly, where was it getting us artistically?"

That was when lead guitarist and songwriter Black Lung Murphy had the idea that led to the rebirth of music. While still retaining the strength and integrity of the death-and-destruction two-cord punk they were playing, he looked back to the music of his childhood - the folk music of the Maritime provinces.

"I'd forgotten just what an outrageous monster of a musician that Don Messer was," says Murphy, of the popular Nova Scotia fiddle player whose television show, Don Messer's Jubilee, was the most



I'se the bye that builds the boat/I'se the bye that sails 'er/I'se the bye that killed me girl/an' then burned down her trailer.

Story By Seymour Klipschitz

progressive force in Canadian music in the 1960's. "And god, Marg Osborne's voice could just grab you by the balls. But my favourite was always Charlie Chamberlain. He made Ted Nugent look like a pussy."

Thus are created legends. The music took on a life of its own, and in three short days the boys were ready to show the world.

All they needed was a new name. "Yeah, our old name, Cockroach Leprosy, didn't say anything about the new us," said bass player Creepers Campbell. "We want our name to make a statement, to tell people what we were all about. Then I remembered something my dad always used to say: there is always room in the lifeboat for a man with

a chainsaw; and there it was."

So Room in the Lifeboat was born and ready to carve out a space in the music scene. Word of the great music and outrageous stage show - Slasher has been known to bite the head off a live flounder - soon spread and their first album was on the way. A first album that many now compare to such seminal masterpieces as Sergeant Pepper, Led Zeppelin I, Days of Future Past and Barry Manilow's Greatest Hits.

Their loud, raunchy, minimalist folk stylings and simple, homespun lyrics did not mask their incredible gift for insightful social commentary but kept the message from being too weighty or pontifical. The first song on the album *Catch Lobsters by Day and Crabs By Night* has more to say about the dreary routine of life than the entire film *Urban Cowboy*. And you can dance to it.

They use the images of their Atlantic life to breath new life into the stale themes of pop music. See how they treat the typical boy-girl relationship in their song *Do Right by the Lassie?*

*After you make seal flipper pie
Are you gonna dance with the seals?
After you make your baby cry
Are you gonna care how she feels?*

And they bring the same visions of their home to songs with deeper themes, such as the alienation of a father and son in *Leaving Home*:

*I'm a Cape Breton Coal miner
just like me dad
'cept that me hair's pink
an I kill when I'm mad.*

Their first album, from their number one hit "Dole Day Bop" is being hailed as the most exciting combination of songs and sights to ever hit the airways. Martha Quinn of MTV remembers the first time she played the video: "I'd never heard of these guys and their name was misspelled on my cue cards so, like, I called them "Bring in the Lightweights" or something and like wow, all of a sudden this video just blows me away. First, like, I'd never seen a lobster trap and I'd certainly never seen thousands of them falling out of the sky on a welfare line. And