

You see, there was this Chick...

BY TIM COVERT

Gaz: So, Chick. Do you mind if I ask you any questions about your health?

Chick: No, that's fine. You mean the BRAIN INJURY! My HEMORRHAGE!

And so it began. My interview with a very casual, and very congested, Chick Grating from the Rhode Island band Scarce, who play at the Birdland two nights this weekend.

Gaz: In general, how was the last year-and-a-half since you played the Halifax pop explosion in October of 1994?

Chick: '95 sucked. Well, I lived.

After the pop explosion that year, Scarce was off to Europe with their new drummer, Chris Barnett (Jud Ehrbar drummed on their first release).

Gaz: What happened after you got back from Europe?

Chick: Well, we toured with Hole and then right after that, on June 12, I had a brain fuckin' hemorrhage.

Gaz: That's pretty scary...

Chick: Only ten percent live.

Gaz: Fuck...

Chick: Yeah.

Gaz: Didn't Peter Buck from REM have the same thing...like a brain aneurysm?

Chick: No, that was Bill Berry.

Is this some kind of rock star disease? I have a friend who has this theory about an entity called the Rock Star Mountain of Death that can metamorphose and kill popular musicians in strange and bizarre ways. For example:

"Hey Buddy, how's the flight looking?"

"Pretty good Richie — pilot says it's smooth flying until...wait a minute! Where'd that mountain come from!! AAhhhhhhhh!!"

"Oooooohahaha!" (imagine ominous evil demon-like voice)

I am very glad that the Rock Star Mountain of Death did not get Chick. The Scarce show at the '94 Halifax Pop Explosion had to be one of the most amazing shows I've ever seen. The band just played their hearts out at the show. A straining, moving, sweaty, exquisitely rockin' time. That is the only time — ever — that I enjoyed a band so much that I went and bought their CD the very next day. A lot of other people did too as Scarce's Red EP was the top of Sam's charts for awhile.

Gaz: Do you have a particular philosophy getting on stage? Do you just go and play your guts out?

Chick: Yeah, that's basically it. Every band changes — I mean, I just had a BRAIN HEMORRHAGE so I don't know how much jumping around I'm gonna do this time.

Gaz: But it's still the same philosophy?

Chick: Oh fuck, yeah. I live for that, man. I do.

At that show, when Scarce came out to do their encore, someone asked them to play "Hope," one of the songs from their EP. They hesitated and said that they kind of couldn't because Chris didn't know the song yet; it was his first gig with the band. The crowd shouted its approval to give it a go anyway.

They did.

That song was like some kind of spiritual ascension for me. The crowd was so good — a mosh not for slamming yourself into people but for becoming part of a seething, grooving, harmonious, symbiotic being. For

that song, the whole tired bunch of us in the audience were a torrid, bubbling, syrupy entity. Moshing before moshing was cool for drunks. It was inspired.

Gaz: Did you expect the Red EP to sell as many as it did?

Chick: Well, I know we're a

good band and we write good songs so to be honest, yeah, I would expect it to if anybody heard it. I know we have good shit.

Gaz: You guys have a new full length record coming out [editor's note: tentatively due to be released

in March], where did most of that creation take place?

Chick: That was last year at this point. We were about to go out on tour to support the record when my head exploded.

Gaz: You've changed some of that old recording around for the upcoming release. How come?

Chick: It's been a year. [Cough]. Excuse me. Our experience in the studio was fair to middling at best as far as the guy we were workin' with. So the memories of makin' this record was that we had Mike Levesque (the drummer on the CD) in there a week before we recorded it. It was just a crazy, high pressure, weird record to make. But I had some songs that I had written right before I fell down and couldn't get up. And we're doing those and we might add them onto the record.

Gaz: Is it going to sound a lot different from Red?

Chick: It sounds kinda different. Y'know, same band, same songs basically. Some of it sounds better. It's a good record. I listened to it the other day — it blows me away. I like it, and I didn't like it for awhile.

One of the neat things about Scarce live is that Chick and bassist/vocalist Joyce Raskin wear these cool, showy, cocktail party clothes. It's so cool to see a spiffy-looking band rock out in style and then at the end of the evening look completely dishevelled.

Gaz: I hear you guys changed drummers again.

Chick: Yeah, his name is Joe Profiteer, he used to be in The Laurels.

Gaz: How long has he been drumming for you?

Chick: Since like a day before I had my brain hemorrhage.

A note to those disappointed by Joyce pulling out of the '95 pop-ex: it turns out that Chick had just returned to the band and they were starting to play again. I forgive her.

Gaz: When did you and Joyce meet?

Chick: I met her in one of these little buildings at Brown University where they let bands play, and they served beer — I don't know if they still do — and Joyce's band was playing. I was there because my girlfriend at the time, Tanya Donnelly, was thinking about trying her out for Belly. When I found out that Joyce wasn't gonna be the one, I called her, 'cause I saw her play and she rocked.

Gaz: You're doing an acoustic show. What was the inspiration for doing that?

Chick: I just love playing like that. You get a new dimension to whatever song you do.

Chick says that after they play up here they're going on a tour of the States, so they are essentially giving us a preview of their tour. So come down to the Birdland this weekend and see one of the best bands anywhere and show them that we love to have them play here.

Scarce plays Saturday night at the Birdland with Coyote and Mars We Love You, and plays an acoustic set on Sunday night followed by a plugged in Al Tuck and Rebecca West.

A curious collision with Sandbox



GAZETTE PHOTO BY DANIELLE BOUDREAU

BY ANDY DREIFELDS

Last Friday, Sandbox returned to Halifax to put on a show and the chosen venue for the gig was our very own Grawood. The guys are still touring and promoting their debut CD, *Bionic*, which is doing quite well.

By the time I got to the Grawood, the Purple Helmets were just finishing their set. I've seen them before and I have to say that I like them. I apologize for missing them. At this point there was going to be about a thirty minute wait before Sandbox came onstage so I headed to the bar with my sidekick, Buck. The Grawood wasn't packed yet, but by the end of the night it was (people wanted to wait and get in free).

Buck and I had just finished pondering the mysteries of the cosmos when the band came on. They played a few songs and everyone present seemed to be having a really good time, but it wasn't until the band dove into "Collide" that people started dancing. Four girls started the pilgrimage to the dance floor and shortly afterwards everyone was losing their "first person dancing blues." Hell, even Buck started dancing on the bar. The strange thing about this dancing business is the way the song was introduced: "This is a song about a dog who got run over by a car," pronounced the lead singer. Yahoo, let's dance!

I turned around to see how the bar was filling up and I was quite impressed. I figured that there was at least a thousand people there but sources tell me that it wasn't quite that much. It must have been the mirrors.

Now that the audience was having a good time, the concert got better. It was one of those give and take things. Later on Sandbox played their first single, "Curious," and that song also went over quite well. Buck couldn't stop dancing and even I was getting into it. We both had colds but mix a few beers with some cold medicine and you've got yourself an instant party.

Sandbox played most of the songs from their album and some others as well. In all, I have to say that the band was great, as was the sound, the songs, and the audience. You should have been there.

Rumour has it that a new Sandbox album is due out in the summer. If you get a chance to see them, do it because sooner or later you'll have to pay the big bucks to see them at the Metro Centre.

I should mention that the only downside to the evening was that the band lost some of their equipment. They were consoled, however, when I informed them that stuff like that happens at the Grawood.

Just kidding!