

The Coolest Band in Town

by Michael Graham

Cool Blue Halo was formed in September of 1991, over a year before I first saw them. During this time they had more than a couple line-up changes, and received an increasingly positive response from crowds and record companies alike. Most recently they have released a five song indie cassette which is becoming more and more difficult to find. What does the future hold for CBH? I'd say that things look pretty good for this group of self-motivated, local musicians.

Review/Interview Cool Blue Halo

I was a bit worried when I popped Cool Blue Halo's five song cassette into the stereo. Would it be over produced and lacking any life as many other tapes tend to be. I really hoped that this wouldn't be the case as this band had made a big impression on me the few times I had seen them at the Deuce. Great guitar-oriented, melodic pop with a some "umph" to it.

By some miracle, the cassette captured this sound and is now part of my current Pixies-Primus-Breeders listening cycle. I consider this to be highly distinguished company and the Cool Blue Halo tape is easily holding its own.

I recently chatted with guitarists/vocalists Barry Walsh and Paul Boudreau, as well as drummer Cliff Gibb about life in one of Halifax's angelically hip pop bands. (Unfortunately, bassist Melanie Rusinak couldn't make it).

Me: So...how long have you guys been involved in the local music scene?

Paul: Oh, since I was around 15 or 16...

Barry: We've all played in dozens of bands - altogether we've probably played in about 36 bands...(laughs).

Paul: Want a list of them? Let's see...bands like Happy Co., Suspect Device, The October Game - Barry played in The October Game. I was in mostly unknown bands.

Cliff: I was in Weasel Face Judge.

Paul: We acquired Cliff from Weasel - sorta...they kicked him out after we asked him to play with us...(laughs).

Me: How long has the current line-up been together?

Paul: Since October.

Barry: Hopefully this will be the one that sticks I think. It's looking that way.

Paul: We're jelling quite well now.

Me: Melanie, your bassist, is in another band...how is that going to work out?

Paul: Yeah she plays with Chaz Rules. We don't really know what will happen. We just more or less play it by ear with Melanie.

Barry: As long as she's interested in playing...and she's contributing her own stuff - I would hope that it's not like a Breeders/Pixies situation. Right now it works out fine...

Paul: We can always play gigs together.

Me: So where did you guys go to school?

Paul: I did a short stint at SMU - you don't have to put that in...(laughs). Barry's a journalist.

Barry: I went to Dal and then I went to Concordia for a journalism degree. That's why I get so mad when I read stuff like [deleted]...(laughs)

Cliff: I went to NSIT - I'm the electronics guy, so I fix all their gear.

Paul: You turn on the "on" switches for us.

Me: I noticed that one of your song titles was taken from Terminator. Do any other movies influence your lyrics?

Paul: "Come with me if you want to live" ...yeah that was Melanie. She wrote that one so maybe I guess she's a big T2 fan. I think that she actually got the idea from the T2 pinball game (laughs). So we aren't influenced by movies we're influenced by ...PINBALL. We don't watch movies or read books, we just play pinball ...(laughs)

Me: Does the band share common musical influences?

Paul: We like to rock!

Cliff: Like April Wine...(laughs)

Paul: I think that's the reason that this particular line-up clicks. When Barry and I formed the band we just got some players and did it! ...[back then] we used to come in with the songs and have to show them [what to play] and there was no real flavour to the songs...but now, when we're working on new material it just clicks. Everybody adds their own flavour to the songs and it works out.

Me: What is that process generally like?

Barry: Well most of the stuff on the new tape comes from rehearsals. Paul or I or Cliff or Mel will have a riff and we piece it together from there. We haven't done a lot of...well, any one of us having a finished product and saying, like, "here it is".

Paul: For the most part it's just a jam - those [songs] are the funnest ones.

Me: Do you do any covers?

Paul: We do a couple. We had She Said, She Said [Beatles], stolen out from under us by a couple of artists...We played it pretty much since the start of the band, but since then Matthew Sweet AND Overwhelming Colorfast have recorded it...

Barry: We do Love Vigilantes by New Order, but they probably wouldn't recognize it.

Me: I read in your press release that you're working on a video. How's that going?

Paul: It was going well, but we didn't get the VideoFACT money which we were REALLY hoping for.

Barry: The good news is that Blue Rodeo and Triumph got their grants.

Paul: We're gonna get it done though...but the helicopter footage is out...(laughs).

Me: I also read that you're working on a full length release...does that mean that you have a deal?



Barry, Cliff, Melanie & Paul wait for their wings.

Paul: Nope. There's no deal yet...There has been label interest. Right now, with the buzz that's on Halifax, the sooner we get something out the better, so we were just doing it ourselves.

Barry: It seems that record companies, especially with "alternative" bands, like to see a finished product...just to see that you're serious about it - and plus it saves them a hell of a lot of money.

Paul: [With respect to Sloan's signing] that was a Cinderella story...Sloan came out of the basement and onto a major label and then everybody figured that all the Halifax bands would come out of

their basements and get signed, but it's not like that. Sloan is just the starting block really - they drew attention here.

Barry: They were lucky that...not luck, because like it or not they write amazing songs...but they were lucky in so far as they had an American label who was interested in them. And American labels are aggressive...Canadian labels are just so fuckin' predictable it's unbelievable...so stuck in what's safe.

Paul: Bands like the Cowboy Junkies...jale, Eric's Trip - American label. God bless America (laughs). It's true. CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

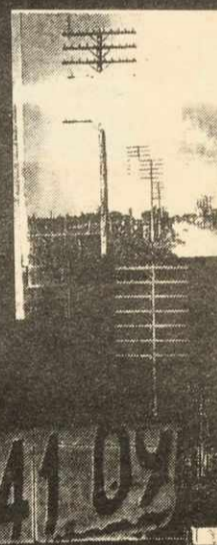
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