

Obscurity Rewarded

WORDS & PICTURE BY
CHRIS YORKE

The art world is big and crazy. Things change all the time, and sometimes all you can rely on is your own conviction in your trade when the going gets tough. There are many who fall between the cracks, very few with enduring talent. Celebrate with me the discovering of two of our Supercity's finest ignored artisans.

Dartmouth's Dean Martin likes the Taco Bells in the states better. He runs the Little Realms Modelling Company, a tiny cottage industry with an aptitude for altruism. After 3 years at Dawson College in Montreal and a background in illustration and design, he works now as a security guard and in his spare time constructs 13th century tudor villages as well as convincing replicas of all imaginable terrains.

"Yeah, big deal!" you say, ignorant. "I've been doing that stuff since grade 8."

Not like this, pal-o-mine. These things have to be seen to be believed. Months of love and labour go into each piece, and the quality is unimaginable. The houses are carefully researched, historically accurate and come complete with blueprints. Dean'll dry-brush for hours just to get the elusive texture he'd been aiming for. He has the skills which one requires to get bills paid, if you are with



Skin art as seen by J.P.

me here.

But Mr. Martin isn't in it for the money, because frankly, there

is none. And even if there is someday, don't worry. Most of his delicate work falls into the hands of

cheesy and lacking sincerity.

Sulking in my beer while the '60s resurfaced at the Grawood made me edgy. I wanted some heavy shit. Something that would scream at me and bite at my ear. Burnt Black took the stage and were happy to satisfy all my needs. With a dropped "D" tuning reminiscent of Soundgarden (although Soundgarden is not a good comparison for their music), they played the most melodic and groove-oriented set all night. The singer was one of those rare few who could sing and scream in tune. And these were no pansy-ass screams. They were too powerful to enter through the ear, so the waves went straight through the skull to the brain — where it counts. One of Jodie Call's studio musicians was mocking them by pretending to bang his head. I was tempted to go tell him he was a flake, but I'm sure that years ago, someone told him the same thing. Burnt Black took all the strong points of the other bands, churned them up and spat them out in your face. They didn't seem to care about the audience, they played themselves dry trying to win the big prize — which was theirs from the first note. With three hours recording time, a new guitar, and \$125, Burnt Black should be happy.

The last band was the crowd favorite, PF Station. I have seen them a few times over the past year, and they are a solid band. Full of funky, free-flowing improvisation, they have made themselves a name around campus. Every time I hear them play, I appreciate them more. But this night, the show had already been stolen by Burnt Black. They finished second with a \$100 gift certificate to Music Shop, and \$125 cash. Not bad for a Wednesday

role-playing gamers and since lots of them are kids he intends to keep the price low so people can keep enjoying them.

Meanwhile on this side of the bridge, a mysterious man sits in his living room, smoking, staring out of the huge windows at the autumn leaves now lazily drifting down, heralding the beginning of the long winter ahead. His pager beeps and he absent-mindedly unbuttons his cardigan as he glides to the phone. "Hello, this is JP." Another job. In seconds a fully operational tattoo studio emerges in the centre of the previously placid lounge, and soon his tattooing gun is humming to old '60s tunes, the glare of his desk lamp overpowering the gentle orange twilight outside.

JP is a native of Quebec City, and a graduate of CEGEP at St. Foy. He shows an undeniably impressive level of skill at his chosen trade, employing dozens of styles and techniques that he's picked up over the years. Claiming a 99% satisfaction rate, he is confident about the future.

Talking about high art, and how tattoo artists seem to get snubbed by most gallery-goin' folk, he says, "The people who are really willing, their skin is better than paper." He's deep into the cosmic aspect of it all, the bond between artist and recipient: "Tattoo is in the mind and in the soul."

JP dislikes doing the mermaid and pirate shlock you see at most parlours, and prefers doing as much of his own design work as possible. In the past he's successfully pulled off demanding jobs requiring landscapes, logos, tribal patterns and even portraits.

"You can't fuck up," he explains, "it's the one thing you can buy for yourself and no one can ever take it away from you."

In this reporter's considered opinion, these two boys do fine work and shouldn't need to be featured in a "starving artist special" in a university newspaper. If you'd like to see some truly amazing stuff and help support these local artisans whose passions are often passed over as folk art or craft, get in touch with them yourself. You can reach Dean through Mirror Universe just across from the Dartmouth ferry terminal, and inquire for JP at the new Mary Jane Hemp Shop on Grafton St. They're worth the search if you value quality over pretention.

If you know of any young artists who should be profiled by the Gazette, let the Arts Editors know about them. Either come by in person to room 312, SUB, or drop us a line at 494-2507.

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Band vs. Band

BY JOHN CULLEN

Last Wednesday night, the Grawood held a competition of music. The Dalhousie Arts Society sponsored a Battle of the Bands with some good prizes to be won. The crowd was large as usual, but most people I talked to had no idea that the event was taking place. For most, it was just an added bonus for relieving mid-term stress. A representative from Barcardi was also present. Between bands, she drew numbers from a hat and gave away free shirts and towels. During the sets, she circled the room and distributed free rum and cokes. Everyone was happy, but when my two friends asked her for another drink, she dropped them cold.

"I thought she liked me," Matt said in a whimper of denial.

"It's her job. She acts like that to push a product. Don't take it personally," I replied. Matt ran from the room in tears.

But the bands were more important to me than a woman sucking up to university students solely because her boss thinks we are a hot demographic. Unfortunately, I only caught the last song of the first band, Solstice Bridge. I couldn't really tell what kind of music they were, but they sounded good. They were acoustic guitar-based, but had the energy of an electric band.

The second act was Jodie Call. She had a great voice with a broad range. The problem was, her songs seemed that they should be filed under Easy Listening or Adult Contemporary. They were not the kind of tunes drunk stu-

dents wanted to hear, so their reception was less than average. All the musicians were obviously well versed in their chosen instruments, but they seemed to be just a tool to get the song across. This was a singer, not a band. The judges (Katherine Hannah, DSU vice-president; Graham Kitson, Grawood DJ; and Paul Moore, local musician) liked them, but only enough to give Jodie Call a third place check for \$100 — which was deserved.

The next band was scary. Named Ophelia's Ghost, they were '80s metal with a female singer. Aside from the dated genre of "Hair Bands" (can you say Bon Jovi during *Slippery When Wet?*) the band wasn't too bad. However, they kept changing singers for every song. They should have stuck with the girl, because she was the best. The guitarist and drummer (who I've also seen karaoke) should stick to their instruments.

A change of pace was needed, but the gears were taken down a few notches too far. John Cornwall and Kristin Hatt's blend of folk and other assorted acoustic music was not what I had expected. You see this was a battle of the Bands, not Duos. Granted, they are both good singers (especially Kristin), but their brand of music is best done by other people. They sing well together, but it seems that sometimes they harmonize too much. There is such thing as overkill. The experience reminded me of seeing footage of Pat Boone rip off Little Richard's "Tuti Fruti" so the white folks could listen to it also; it was

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