

ARTS & CULTURE

Florian and Swift kick ass

BY JANET FRENCH

Talent, harmony and feminism were oozing out of the North Street Church last Saturday at the Women's Tea Dance.

The event featured performances by Ember Swift and Andrea Florian, two artists from Toronto who are renowned for their "tell-it-like-it-is" brand of music.

Swift kicked the evening off with a set of unique and passionate takes on life. Her style is complex, and her songs are musically heterogeneous.

Much thumping, pounding and banging occurs as Swift manipulates the guitar in surprising and pleasing ways. Her lyrics are blatant truths, sometimes gentle but occasionally yelled, and hit home via her piercing voice.

Ember Swift is positively enthralling to watch. She is constantly bopping around, caught up in the moments of her own music. However, one thing is for sure — Swift's acoustic guitar leads

a harsh life.

Andrea Florian followed Swift. Like Swift, Florian's music contains a fair bit of political commentary, a welcome change from the ordinary.

Her tunes are more classically acoustic than Swift's, and are entrancing and melodic. Florian has a soft-but-powerful voice and her lyrics are captivating, especially in the *a capella* snippets she performs. The songs are highly personal accounts, and occasionally anecdotal in nature. There's nothing fabricated — it's all straight from the heart and totally human, which makes it highly enjoyable.

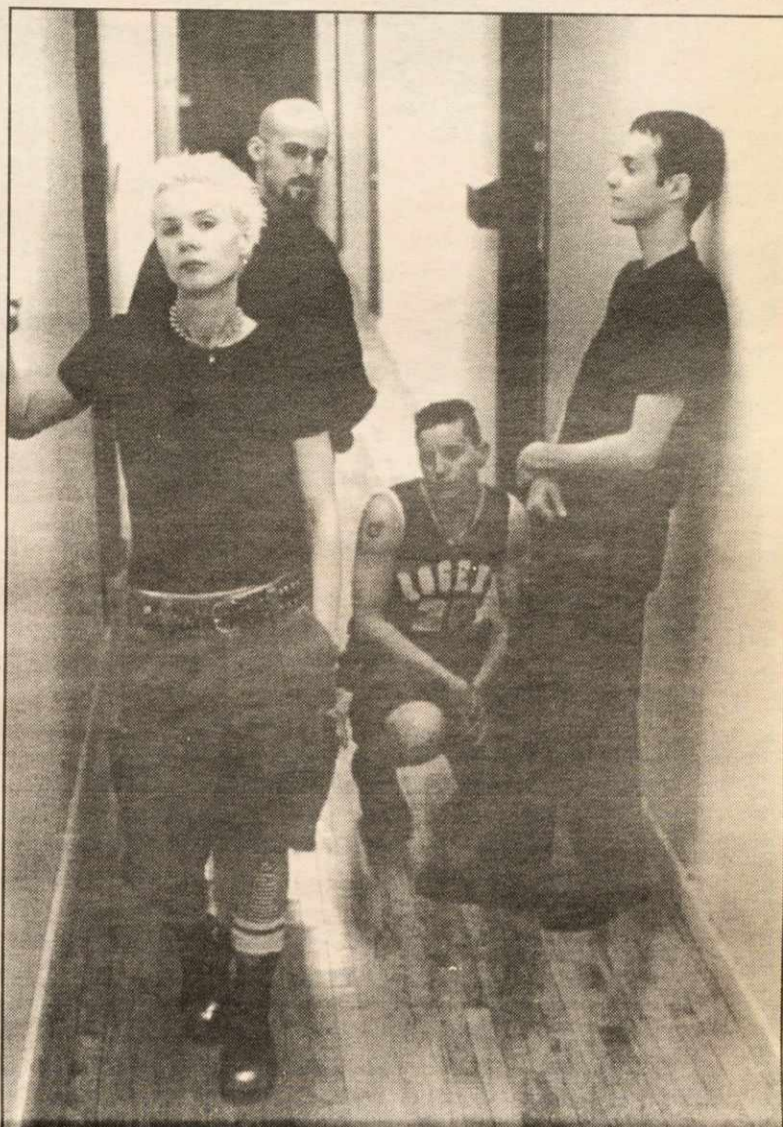
Neither Swift nor Florian were accompanied by their bands, deciding to perform solo instead. This provided for much experimentation and musical variation. Indeed some of the songs were so different from the digitally re-mastered perfection of their CDs that they were not recognizable at first. Nevertheless, both artists proved that although backup is nice,

they are perfectly capable of producing a diverse range of sounds to entertain the crowd all by themselves.

Another impressive aspect of the performance was the cooperative rapport between Swift and Florian. They both spontaneously appeared on stage to sing backup vocals for one another, and seemed to really enjoy each other's music in spite of the difference in style.

However, a large proportion of the audience was chatting through the entertainment, which was thoroughly frustrating. Florian and Swift are bad background music for a conversation as their lyrics must be slowly savoured if they are to be fully appreciated. The chatting patrons certainly missed an opportunity to open their minds.

But those who were listening surely agree that Swift is a powerful entertainer and Florian is positively charming. The two artists are a kick-ass combination and their voices are certainly being heard.



Ember Swift: talent, harmony and feminism at the Women's Tea Dance

The rewards of being Synergised

BY SOHRAB FARID

Last weekend, when I should have been reading cases and writing essays, I ventured into lands hitherto unexplored on my part at a gig featuring a carnival of artists with a broad range of styles.

Held on consecutive nights at the Diomio Café and the Bike Shop, *Synergy 98* provided me with the opportunity to learn a couple of things.

I learned that if Paromita Adhikari's organizational abilities don't take her somewhere, her voice and showmanship will.

The sole organizer of this "artistic collaboration of multiple disciplines" stopped directing the show long enough to rock two sets herself, backed by a band that included a flutist, a bassist, a percussionist, and a violinist. Commanding and infectious, songs like "Gisele" and "The Image is Fading" might just make their way around the Halifax independent scene in the new year.

When Chris Yorke talks, people listen. The notorious

performance artist, branded in *The Coast* as something like Halifax's most embarrassing artist, was seemingly subdued and quite interactive.

Refusing to put a high heel though a pumpkin as he initially intended, or defecate in a diaper made of a Canadian flag as he once did, he instead asked the audience for help in discovering a common truth. Even without any genuinely controversial material, the audience still listened, probably waiting for the proverbial shit to hit the fan — or maybe in his case, the floor.

If I have to listen to contemporary rock, I want it dirty, or whatever the opposite of clean is. The Bloody Martyrs, a trio of northend artists who probably hate being considered academic, displayed these experimental leanings. The Martyrs performed short sets consisting of distorted chord-driven instrumentals and melodic vocal ballads. Their song "Coma" deserves a macabre/comedic music video starring animated bad-ass skeletons taking

over a bad-ass world.

I learned what Gumbo dancing is. Descriptions only do injustice, but it's basically an African dance done with rubber boots. Pleasing to the eyes and ears.

I learned Halifax has a b-boy troupe. Lockdown, a trio of breakdancers, flexed their skills to a few songs, including James Brown's "Funky Drummer", a b-boy classic.

I learned the world, at least part of it in Halifax, has an insatiable hunger for anything related to Jerry Springer, as a mostly-unprepared skit about the show still somehow managed to go over well.

I learned that introspective poetry is a beautiful thing. Actually, I knew that before, but I have to stay within the format. Thanks anyway, Jessie Chalmers, for rounding out the show.

Afterwards, I went to the *Synergy* cast party and learned that partying until 6am when you have cases to read and essays to write is a bad idea.

Go figure.

CALNEN PHOTOGRAPHY

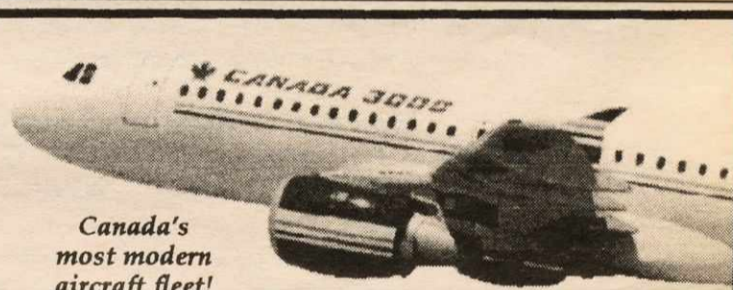
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TO	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
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CALGARY	—	18:55	—	—	—	—	—
TORONTO	—	15:25 ^{8,10} 16:00 ³ 20:15 ⁹	12:25 ³	15:20 ³ 23:05 ⁸	—	—	—
ST. JOHN'S	—	10:25 ^{8,10} 11:05 ³ 15:20 ⁹	—	10:25 ³ 18:05 ⁸	—	—	—

¹Begins Dec 21 ²Ends Dec 20 ³Week of Dec 1 only
⁴Week of Dec 7 only ⁵Week of Dec 14 only

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