

Sloan caught up in a McInnes Room mosh

by Michael Graham

It's been an amazing two weeks for local music fans of all ages. The resurgence in all-ages shows is great to see. Back in the mid-eighties it seemed that all of that all of the gigs were accessible to my friends and me (all junior high students). This was back when there were great shows at the Club Flamingo, Dal, the NSCAD caf, the place above the Bible Society and so on. No ID required. I thought that those days had ended, but in the last few weeks there have been excellent shows for kids who love the local music scene, but don't happen to be 19. Sunday night was a prime example.

CONCERT REVIEW
Hardship Post, jale, Sloan
Sunday, October 3rd
McInnes Room

Hardship Post were probably the tightest band of the night. They started their set by playing the two opening chords of Sloan's "500 Up" over and over and over again which was quite humorous. They then launched into their own material and it went over very well with the young crowd who were eager to mosh. The energy of the band seemed a bit dissipated because of the sheer size of the McInnes Room, but then again, I am used to seeing them at the Deuce where everything is cramped, crazed and LOUD. Hardship Post's set was excellent nonetheless. They really wailed and the pit got reasonably wild and fun. I give them bonus points for the bass feedback.

You gotta love jale. They have an endearing quality because of their modest, tentative disposition on stage — almost self-effacing. They sometimes look at each other as if to say "I hope I'm playing in key". I was really pulling for them, because they were, at the beginning, pretty nervous — who wouldn't be?

Consider their situation...they have been playing their instruments for maybe 18 months or so, they are probably playing the biggest venue of their

career with about 800 in attendance, and they had to cut through the inevitable hype that has surrounded them since they signed the "big deal" with SubPop. On top of that, Eve was playing a (gorgeous) new Telecaster for the first time.

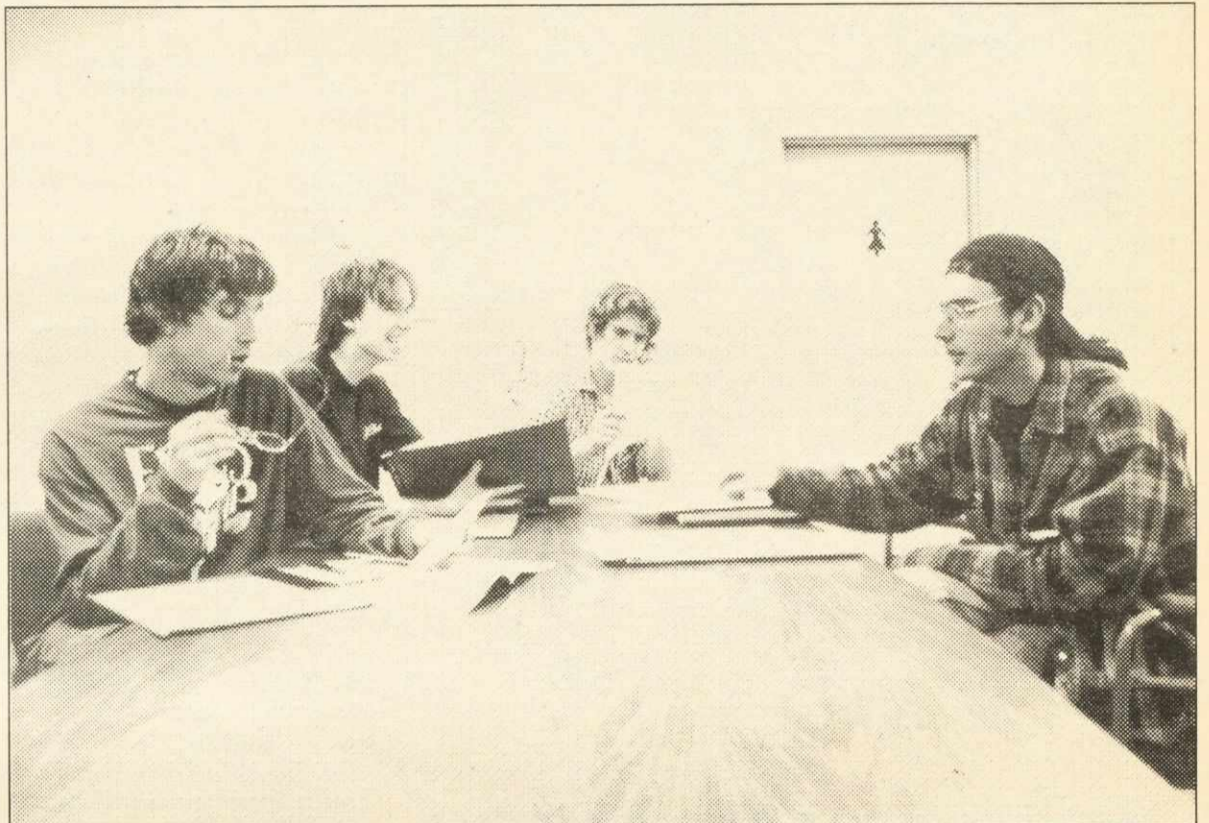
I needn't have worried, because they put on an excellent show. They played well and weren't fazed by the restless crowd. Their original stuff sounded better than ever and as the set went on, the nervousness disappeared and they all seemed amused at the moshing and crowd-body-surfing that was going on. The only thing that didn't work out very well was the new song, which they'd never played live before. It showed potential, but definitely needs more work.

Jale is a band with a lot of guts...and most definitely a good work ethic considering how far they have come since I first saw them a year ago — truly amazing. I can't wait to hear their new single and sometime next year, a full blown cd!

Sloppy, messy, bouncy, and fun. That's what the Sloan set was. They played material from just about all of their releases. If my memory serves me correctly they played the following songs (in no particular order): "Pretty Voice", "Lucky For Me", "500 Up", "I am the Cancer", "Take it In", "Sugartune", "Median Strip", "Raspberry", "Pillow Fight", "Shame Shame", some new stuff...and...oh yeah... "Underwhelmed".

I sensed that something was wrong with the universe when, as Chris Murphy walked across the stage to check his bass setup, most of the girls started screaming as if he was Paul McCartney! He seemed bemused. Maybe Sassy was right when they featured Sloan as the cutest band around — who knows?

The crowd went nuts as soon as the band began to play. The songs were played with abandon and gusto...verve even. The pit was fun, and contrary to popular belief there were females moshing and thrashing about and (*gasp*) the males weren't even hurting them. Don't believe the bullshit being spewed by the grrrl movement, or



DALPHOTO: TAMMY ROGERS

Sloan discusses lucrative action-figure market before Sunday's show.

Fugazi unless you actually believe that women are too fragile to be in the midst of the action. Nonsense!

There were some impressive stage dives made by kids who deftly outran security. However, the best stage dive of the night goes to Jenny Pierce (of jale) who launched herself into the crowd after dueting with Chris on "I am the Cancer".

Then it happened...Sloan lip synched to "Planet Earth" by Duran Duran. Andrew was happily pretending to play bass, Jay was happily pretending to play drums, and Chris "Le Bon" Murphy had all of the steps, spins, and pelvic thrusts you could imagine. It was the funniest f*cking thing I have seen in a long, long time. Chris takes the cake as the resident goofball of the Halifax scene. What a guy.

Sloan finished off their set with a crazed version of "Underwhelmed" and the moshing was extremely fun/sweaty/stinky/disgusting — everything a mosh should be.

After a few minutes Patrick came out for an encore and played a beautifully melodic guitar/vocal piece which will, hopefully, make it to the next album which they are now working on. Finally, for the last song, Sloan played a great version of Eric's Trip's "Smother". Then the lights came up and people started looking for lost contact lenses and wallets.

Interested in the local music scene? Got an Internet account? (as a student at Dal you are entitled to a VAX account). If so, there is a electronic mailing list devoted to the Halifax music scene. To get involved send an e-mail message to the following address: IN%gen4114@husky1.stmarys.ca".

This will subscribe you to the list and you will receive any mail which is sent to it by other members. In order to contribute (ask questions...anything) send e-mail to IN%gen4114+SLOAN@husky1.stmarys.ca". Any further questions can be directed to jrcovey (VAX address); jrcovey@ac.dal.ca (for users of other systems (i.e. not dal))

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ing — he seems quite content to announce the words).

In keeping with this ill-inspired trend of hearkening back to the glorious era known as '70s music, the Pet Shop Boys offer us an modernized version of the Village People's "Go West". It's great. If you liked Erasure's Abba updates, you will sink back into a blissful trance as *Very* closes with the just-recognizable cover.

The oddity about the Pet Shop Boys is the fact that in nine years, their sound has remained virtually unchanged. They were ahead of their time in 1984 when "West End Girls" became a club hit, and now they are just keeping up. From album to album, the number of new fans has not increased substantially — they were huge when touring for *Please* and they're still huge (but not much more huge) now.

If you are already a Pet Shop Boys fan, then this album will be the fine finish for their innovative first decade. If you hate them, you'll receive some more ammunition. If you like their music, but don't care to hear too many songs in a row by them (like myself), you will find this album to be, yes, *Very* Pet Shop Boys, and obtaining the best tracks through various illegal means which I am not advocating here would be the best move for your ears and wallet.

LaTOURing

by Richard Lim

I don't care who owns Island Records these days, they're still at the front of the pack when it comes to signing a risky and often out-there variety of musical acts. I have no idea who or what LaTOUR is, but *home on the range* is a collection of really, really cool stuff.

home on the range
 LaTOUR
 Island Records

The first song, "Following You", is the most accessible track because it is the one which most resembles the kind of layered yet bouncy dance music that dominates a lot of clubs today. However, it is followed by the humorous "Craziaskowboi" and disorienting "Hypnomania", both of which tend towards the psychedelic. "The Cure is Found" returns briefly to the comfortable driving rhythms of "Following You", but soon the listener is swamped by strange sounds from all directions, lyrics which barely acknowledge the existence of meter and often seem to be coming in too early, and even an over-enthusiastic mambo-ish harangue which continues after the song ends (I don't know how to describe it — think of the background voice in Peter

Gabriel's "In Your Eyes" but even crazier than that).

I'm not sure what array of tastes LaTOUR intended to appeal to when this album was made, nor will I attempt to classify the music as alternative or ambient techno or whatever. Listening to all of *home on the range* in one shot is like listening to a couple different albums, where the multitude of sounds and even the vocals seem to change pace, mood and mindset with every new track. I can't recommend LaTOUR enough, nor can I lend the CD out to anyone else. It's spending a lot of time in my player these days.

Guns n' crows

by Tom Conen

Only Duff McKagan of GN'R could call a tune "Fuck You" and not surprise. Though *Believe* has a few good moments and a bevy of guests, the album is marred by Duffs limited, almost monotone vocal range. His dull, congested, low-pitched slurred delivery

Believe In Me
 Duff McKagan
 MCA

takes its toll on the human ear. The man desperately needs a bee-sting in the nads while belting out lyrics. *Believe* is saved by a roster of talent, a

rogue gallery of shiny happy rock-ghouls. Having Slash and most of GN'R (except Axl) assist makes things sound familiar. Sebastian Bach and Lenny Kravitz handle one song each, both songs are the textbook definition of greatness. Some rappers also dole out the def jams on one track, ensuring tremendous variety. Though *Believe* is definite 'listen before you buy' material, fans of his guests and of GN'R will likely give in out of curiosity. However, to satisfy jaded consumers, not to mention freeloading unkempt media scum, Duff must either relinquish or improve his voice in future solo stints.

August and Everything After
 Counting Crows
 Geffen

Despite a few promising song titles like "A Murder of One" and "Anna Begins", this album is a dud. Half the songs sound like John Cougar Mellencamp on downers, while others over-emulate the quivering weepy vocal style of REM's Michael Stipe. The songs are slow, plodding, lack both range and direction, and amount to emotional silly-putty smarm. Yuppie-tunes. Young punks are tempted to storm radio stations that inflict this fluff, and who can blame them. For a rock-junkie like myself, the Counting Crows amount to outright ear-torture. Neil Young said "keep on rockin' in the free world" and by gum he was right.

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