

# Don't worry about the group's name — the music is pretty good

by Nina Kolunovsky

About a month ago, I was hit with a question the answer to which, I am certain, will ensure peace on Earth and the survival of civilization as we know it. The question concerns band names.

Sometimes their meaning is simple and obvious (i.e. Men Without Hats). Sometimes their meaning is strange and obscure (i.e. Barenaked Ladies). "But what kind of a name," said I to my friend Laura, referring to one of her all-time favourite independent Toronto bands, "is High Treason?"

High Treason, as I found out at their recent Mainstreets show, comes "from this song we used to do." That's it. I guess I overestimated that saving the civilization stuff.

As for High Treason, I still haven't figured out why they are as small (but growing bigger by the minute) as they are. Most of the really small bands I know have reasonable music, but fail miserably in two departments.

1) Lyrics — they seem to believe that "Screw this, fuck that, I've got angst and/or a broken heart" is sufficient as long as they

2) look like a band.

High Treason has neither of these problems. None of the band's members (Michael Byron, lead vocals, guitar, lyrics, Simon Elkin, drums and Evan Fine, bass guitar) have black leather jackets, perms or visible tattoos. The look like U of T engineering drop-outs.

Both Simon and Michael are former York students (English and Performance respectively). As Simon puts it, "The very slim and grossly underpaid ghosts of our education still haunt the halls of York."

The lyrics are good. They make sense, they rhyme and they stay in

**concert**  
High Treason  
Grad Lounge  
Friday, November 15

your mind after the show — all one needs from lyrics in my book. The band does covers as diverse as the Doors and the theme song for *Gilligan's Island*, but their main strength is original songs. They deal with love, sex, madness, Jesus Christ, the fragility of life and the Swedish Chef from *The Muppets Show*. Michael describes his songs as "darkly humorous."

With such basic and common influences as Rush, Queen, The Who, Kim Mitchell (and not so common ones like Lerner and Leowe and Benny Hill), the band manages to come up with an original sound all of its own.

Since all of the band members have full-time jobs (the two York graduates work for the government, indicating a bizarre and frightening trend), live concerts are rare events.

At the Mainstreets show, I loved "Heart in Pieces," the first song of the first set. I loved "All I See is Sex," the last song of the second set. I loved everything in between, except for the turkey sandwich, which seemed to be made from dehydrated rubber.

The group is putting together a second tape (the first sold out within two weeks) and just finished filming a second video. The producer, director, and other various small job doer for the videos is Drew Walker, a York University film major. From what I saw of the first draft, he can focus really well — I'm told that the final cut is much better.

So why should you go out and spend your hard-earned money to see High Treason? My philosophy is "If I'm going to go out and spend my



**HIGH TREASON: made up of former York students, they occasionally return to play small but loyal crowds at the Grad Lounge**

hard-earned money to see a band, I want to know that the money is not going to a highly paid marketing machine/hair designer/plagiarism at-

torney."

Mostly, however, it's because coming across an original band with a truly excellent drummer is an expe-

rience to be treasured, which is exactly what I intend to do at their concert at the Grad Lounge on Friday, November 15.

## The most free stuff in the business

by Kathryn Bailey

**concert**  
Blur  
Lee's Palace  
Monday, October 28

Whoever promotes this band knows exactly what they want.

British pop idols Blur played their first ever North American date *twice* last Monday. And it is obvious they intend to deftly take the new music throne from Jesus Jones.

Catering to the media crowd, plus about 120 curious fans who were willing to freeze for two hours, Blur did a pre-show show. Not only did we get this free show, but free snacks, free cassette singles, free sandwiches, free drinks and free t-shirts — all handed out by bathing beauties straight off the cover of the band's album, *Leisure*. These women must have frozen their bathing caps off when sent down the line with their peanut butter and jelly hors d'oeuvres trays.

Although this kind of suck-up-to-everyone crap is usually reserved for trendy bands who will be nowhere in a couple of months, Blur seems to be able to pull it off and remain respectable. Their show/s was/were actually quite good.

The first appearance was amazingly energetic. They began in an almost thrash mode, a total contrast to the material on *Leisure*. I wondered for a moment if this was the same band that released the harmless pop single "There's No Other Way." They conformed to the image that graced the cover of the British *New Musical Express*; yes, these were the menacing creatures who glare from their video and the back of their album; and, yes, they did finally play the single — at their and its raunchy best.

The audience couldn't help but bounce about — neither could the band. The lead vocalist has perfected

some questionable stage antics, including diving from the monitors, jumping to incredible heights, landing on other band members and banging the microphone against his head (for an atmospheric sound effect, I suppose).

As I was ushered out, I doubted the second show would be up to much. How could they possibly have had any energy left?

When Blur finally arrived before the half-new crowd, they announced that this was their premier in North America. Many tried to correct them, but they didn't care. In fact, they appeared dazed, as if they'd had a drink or two. But this did not mar their energy; it enhanced it.

The second show surpassed the first. They played the same set, with few additions; except for a few technical difficulties, it was pure entertainment.

Blur has no doubt won over the media and everyone who only saw the second show. One wonders if it was necessary to give away all that free stuff.

These boys are true marketing — I mean, *musical* geniuses.

## Old band is the cutting edge of apple pie

by Christine F. de Leon

And then rock created The Violent Femmes, the cutting edge of apple pie, no pretention, just three American boys playing to an audience of hundreds.

This was part of the problem: the Femmes couldn't hold the audience. At times, it seemed that concertgoers had to make up their own fun by flinging themselves about.

**concert**  
Violent Femmes  
The Concert Hall  
Monday, October 28

But the Femmes held out for the first set, which consisted of new material. They were honest musicians, not audience teasers; the set featured strong guitar, awesome bass and drums that caved the roof in.

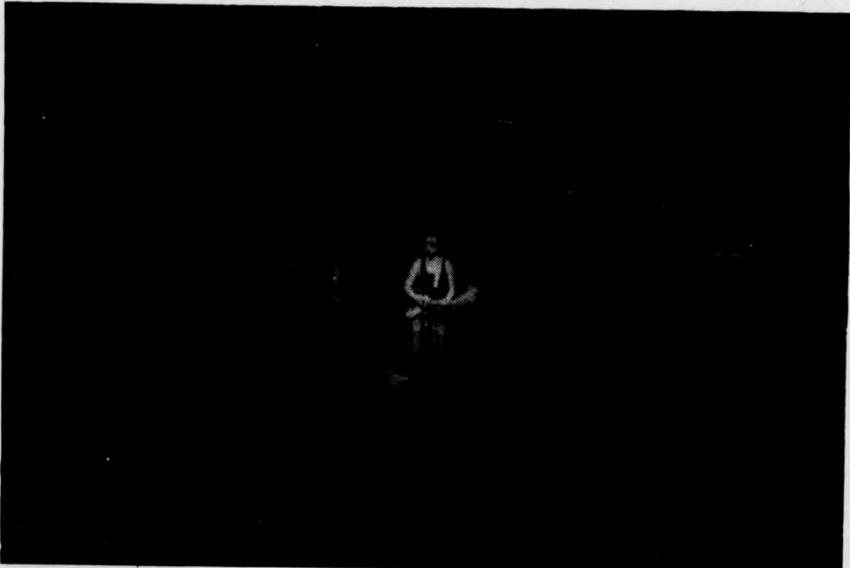
The Femmes were dealing with a new kind of support, mostly from 15-year-olds acquainted only with their new album, which the Femmes played brilliantly.

"American Music" and "Make More Money" were high-energy numbers, with the Femmes and the audience feeding off each other. "Country Death Song" was poetically executed, but coolly received by Femmes fans

nouveau. This left veteran Femmes fans drowning in a sea of Benetton's and a lack of classic material.

There was an excellent horn section, consisting of trombone, sax, conch shell and Asian horns that exploded into ornate orchestration.

Every pimply-faced teenager's anthem "Add It Up" made a happy middle ground for old and new fans, but that seemed to be the only link between what the Femmes are headed for and what they are compromising.



**Fifteen year-olds still fill auditoriums for the Violent Femmes. The band itself played an honest concert, working strongly on the guitar, bass and drums.**



### Top Twenty

- 1 Public Enemy.....*Apocalypse 91*..... Def Jam/Columbia/Sire
- 2 Pixies.....*Trompe le Monde*.....Polygram
- 3 Sons of Freedom (C).....*Gump*.....Chrysalis/MCA
- 4 Digital Poodle (C).....*Soul Crush*.....DOV
- 5 Look People (C).....*Boogazm*.....Hypnotic/A&M
- 6 Nirvana.....*Nevermind*.....DGC/MCA
- 7 Red Hot Chili Peppers.....*Blood Sugar Sex Magic*.....Warner
- 8 Cypress Hill.....*Cypress Hill*.....Ruffhouse/Columbia
- 9 The Coles (C).....
- 10 Robert Hitchcock and the Egyptians.....*Persplex Island*.....A&M
- 11 Me, Mom and Morgentaler (C).....*Clown Heaven and Hell*
- 12 Organs (C).....*People Power*.....Fox International
- 13 The Vandals.....*Fear of a Punk Planet*.....Triple XXX
- 14 Dinosaur Junior.....*Fossils*.....SST
- 15 The Arrogant Worms (C).....*The Arrogant Worms*.....The Arrogant Worms
- 16 The Psychedelic Furs.....*World Outside*.....Columbia/Sony
- 17 Blur.....*Leisure*.....Capitol/EMI
- 18 The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprosy.....*TV Drug of the Nation*.....4th & Broadway
- 19 Quit Earlier.....*Thoughts*.....ESYNC
- 20 The Holly Cole Trio (C).....*Blame It on My Youth*.....Alert

as of October 29

(C) denotes a Canadian act