

## Halifax Pop Explosion continues ...



Six Finger Satellite singer in his non-feline state  
photo by Marc Landry

weekend. They used an old synthesiser which repeated the same sequence again and again while the guitars wove around it. And then there were growled vocals on top of all that. In one song where the synth sounded like a cat mewing, the singer leaped off the stage and crawled around the audience on all fours licking people. A very bizarre experience.

The bar show on Saturday night began with Montreal's *Local Rabbits* who were pretty unmemorable. They seemed intent on just giving the crowd what they wanted and sacrificed their individuality by doing so. Nothing about them really jumped out except one of their slower, more tender songs which had a repeated lyric about "wanting to smash your head in with a rock". But that was it.

Joy of joys, it was *Hardship Post* again after that; they were just as wonderful as the night before. I should leave it at that before the sycophancy gets unbearable. The next act was one of those added bonuses that was unexpected, but a delight to behold nonetheless. Because a couple of acts had dropped out, Bob Wiseman had stepped in to take their place and took with him the act whose album he was producing at the time. And that act turned out to be none other than *Bruce McCulloch* of 'Kids In The Hall' fame (it wasn't totally unexpected as he was sighted the previous evening just -ahem- hanging out). He took to the stage to be greeted with a call of "I love you" to which he retorted "You don't even know me..." It's always nice to see such comic genius close up. He sang about being a Doors fan, about love, about drugs and all the other important facets of life. As with his previous musical endeavours, the songs were chocked full of one liners (such as "Our love is like a dolphin washed ashore which has started to smell and whose eyes are beginning to bulge, but also in a negative kind of way..."). I could be slightly off here, but you get the idea though). Then after four songs he left the stage leaving the other members of the band.

That is when *Bob Wiseman* took centre stage. He covered a lot of ground going from acoustic folk to full band 'rawknroll' songs. And most of it was pretty good too; very political in places but the fact that the Clayoquot tree stump was outside tipped us off to the fact that this may be the case. Unfortunately the sound system went a bit awry at this point and it got horribly

distorted at times, but this seemed almost a blessing as Bob started to perform some of his jazz improvisations. His long jazz improvisations. His boring, long jazz improvisations. They really did put a damper on the evening and by the time that he left the stage I was hoping that it was HIS bike which was locked to the tree stump and had to be removed immediately. I should add that there were good moments too; he just seemed to misjudge the crowd on a mammoth scale.

Last of the night were *Scarce*, a band that crawled from the wreckage of the vastly underappreciated *Anastasia Screamed*. I think that by this time that my enthusiasm for music had been dampened by Mr. Wiseman's performance as *Scarce* didn't seem nearly as good as I had hoped. It's just that for a band with such a reputation for dynamic live shows, they seemed rather ordinary. In saying that, there was some nice interaction between *Chick Graning* and *Joyce Raskin* with their vocals and guitars playing off each other in a pleasurable way. They are a band that I would like to see live again, and I shall be trying to pick up their latest EP, *Red*, as soon as I can. And they have my heartfelt apologies for my apathy because I am sure they deserve better.

### Sunday

The final day of the Pop Explosion, and unfortunately we were not able to stick around for the finale that evening which was to feature *Eric's Trip*, *Hip Club Groove*, *Stinkin' Rich*, *The Superfriendz* and *Trike*. Instead we made it to the 'Indie Symposium' that afternoon again where, amongst other, Fredericton's *Mona* were playing. They are another band whom I am always happy to see perform live as they inevitably put on a good show. And they didn't let me down on Sunday either despite some problems with the acoustics of the rather grandiose 'upstairs at the Khyber Cafe' concert hall they were performing in. They then did the demo tape game downstairs trying their luck at the "Win Studio Time With Steve Shelley" contest. My heartfelt hopes go with them, and I hope they remember this when they hit the big time.

So it was over. The explosion subsided, and everyone headed home. It was quite simply one of the most enjoyable ways to spend a weekend that I can think of - dozens of splendid bands to see, lots of wonderful music to buy and plenty of interesting people to pass the time with. I am already planning my trip for next year. Thanks go out to everyone who was involved in making the trip possible, including Decent Management and our buddies up at CHSR.



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