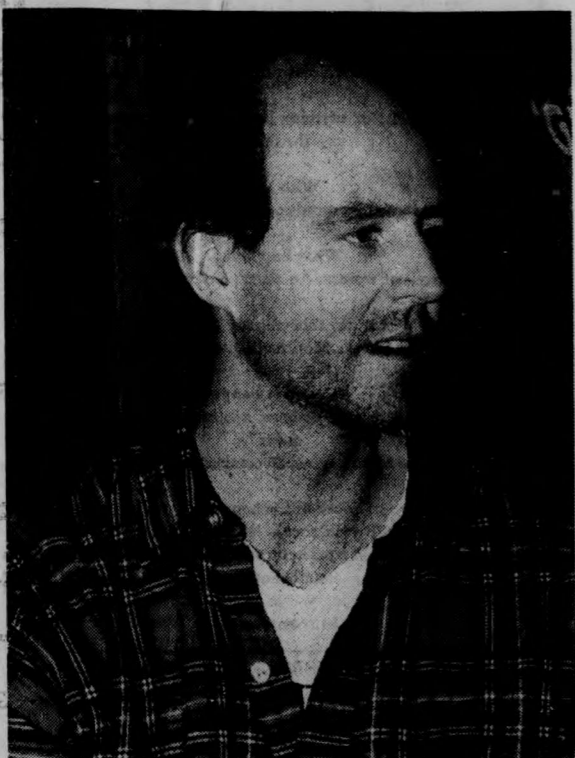


# Maritime songwriter remembers Montreal



Singer, songwriter Brent Mason. DREW GILBERT PHOTO

Musician Brent Mason has commemorated the tragedy of the Montreal Massacre by composing a song entitled "Song for Marc Lepine."

According to Mason his intention was to try to understand how and why these things happen. "The song paints a picture of Marc. It looks at his childhood and tries to understand a bit of how this guy was created. It is by no means an apology. It is a complete condemnation of a man and his violent act."

The actual writing of the song was not a difficult endeavour for Brent. "It was one of those songs that was just sitting there. I was walking downtown and I saw a woman wearing a Montreal Massacre pin and at the same time I heard church bells. It was an epiphany. I turned around, ran back to my apartment, and it came right out. I wrote it in an hour."

Mason says that for the most part he has been getting positive comments since writing the song in December of 1994. "I get all sorts of different reactions from people about the song. Sometimes when I perform the song people will cry and shake their heads. Occasionally people will get up and leave because they can't take it. It doesn't get much air play because it is intense."

One performance, however, did meet with a negative response. Brent was opening for Suzanne Agluklark at Mount Saint Vincent in Halifax when he was 'attacked' by a group of women. They were angry with him for mentioning Marc Lepine's name. "They did not listen to the song; they just decided that it should be censored," says Mason.

He says he is concerned that people actually get the message of the song. "It is a little movie. My intention was to paint the picture of Marc Lepine and who he was. We need to better understand where these people come from in order to make sure that these things do not keep happening."

Jenn Brown

## song for marc lepine

i heard the words a few years ago  
i guess it's funny how the time can roll by  
that he walked into class and gunned them all down  
now we're reminded to remember to cry  
in the camera flash of a heartbeat  
when a million dreams disappeared  
there was bodies laid out over books and exams  
and a silence swollen with fear

and who is the man with the gun in his hand?  
wouldn't we all like to know  
what's in his mind that makes him unwind  
what started the bad blood to flow?

he said my father came home to us drunk all the time  
i smelled cigarettes, beer and the rain  
he beat me and mom till he was blue in the face  
he'd say sorry, then he'd do it again  
but everything seemed so normal to me  
there was blood in the cracks of the tile  
shattering glass, fistfuls of hair  
you forget about it after a while...

and who is the man with the gun in his hand?  
wouldn't we all like to know  
what's in his mind that makes him unwind  
what started the bad blood to flow?

he said i will not go gentle into that good night  
i'm gonna take a few women with me  
you know i was so ugly when i was eighteen  
and none of those bitches would kiss me  
i thought soldier of fortune might rescue my soul  
i'd be a hero, a dream mercenary  
command the respect of the faces i meet  
they might not like me, but they're gonna fear me

and who is the man with the gun in his hand?  
wouldn't we all like to know  
what's in his mind that makes him unwind  
what started the bad blood to flow?

now i'm sitting here silent, as lonesome as hell  
and i'm thinking 'bout the world way outside  
the clock on the church chimes 12 lonesome bells  
but it was 14 women who died  
so where are you now, mr lepine  
is your miserable skin on the rocks  
do those left behind by your twisted mind  
find solace in the tick of a clock

and who is the man with the gun in his hand?  
wouldn't we all like to know  
what's in his mind that makes him unwind  
what started the bad blood to flow?

## What the Montreal Massacre means to me...

ANDREW BROWN

By this time, I do not believe that a person exists in North America who doesn't know about the Montreal massacre which occurred at the Université de Québec a Montreal UQAM on December 6, 1989. Fourteen engineering students, all of whom were women, were ruthlessly killed by Marc Lepine.

Since that dreadful day, memorial services across Canada are held to commemorate their loss and to remind us of the violence against women being perpetuated within our society. I have read numerous articles about this event and what it should mean to us as men and women. I have observed that the author's personal involvement is as an observer to the events. I have never seen anyone who was directly involved in the aftermath of the massacre speak out nor have I read anyone saying that they knew any of the victims. Perhaps the reason their voices have remained silent is that in most of these articles the author's involvement in the tragedy is as an observer. The personal pain and grief denies full expression in the written word. Or perhaps their pain should be private and not made available to the voyeuristic readership at large. Or finally, they just want to remember their friends as the wonderful people they were and not as the martyrs they have come to represent for some great cause. I can say this because it is how I have felt every year since 1989.

I knew Anne-Marie Plante-Edouard from my days attending John Abbott College in Montreal. We took Calculus 11 together and we were beyond casual acquaintances, just shy of close friends. She was so energetic, positive, lively and involved in everything around school. Our friendship was at a tender stage when we both went our separate ways: me to Bishop's University, she to UQAM.

Our first Christmas break, I ran into her at the cinema and we had a great chat. She was happy to be at UQAM and everything was going great. I was glad to see her and I hoped that I would see her again.

My next Christmas break I returned home to find that she had been one of the last women killed by Marc Lepine shortly before he took his own life. My immediate reaction was "Why her?" The next thing I thought was "Why did someone not do something to stop Marc Lepine's rampage?" At the time, I meant while he was killing the women, but now I feel that many opportunities were missed along the road leading up to the killings.

How come no one ever said to Marc "Hey Marc when are you going to realize the women are not to blame for your problems. You have had the controlling hand in getting yourself to this point in life... when are you going to start taking responsibility for your life. The media myth about feminism being against men is crap. The male ideals that men should be strong, aggressive, and that if they have a problem they should solve it on their own are also crap. Don't buy into them. They will warp and destroy you by making your life all the more unbearable."

How come no one ever recognized that "Hey Marc really seems to be having problems why can't we try to help him get over this difficult period in his life?" Everyone could see the signs but no one was willing to react to them. "We will wait until he asks for our help," but what has waiting ever accomplished over actively offering help and continuing to offer help when it is inevitably refused the first time. It is this greater failing of our society that I feel we as men bear the responsibility for change. The world in 1989 wasn't able to avert the disaster, but we can.

I feel the world has changed since 1989 and small gains have been made towards breaking down the walls of aggression within our society. We as men must recognize the effect of the violent subculture which we have seen and participated in. It is only through awareness of ourselves, as men and the violence we harbour within, and why we hold onto it, are we going to be able to stop the next Marc Lepine. We, as men, can offer a hand to our fellow men, who are struggling with their aggression towards women and men, by showing them through our example that there are ways to channel this aggressive energy so positive things are accomplished and we move forward out of the cycle.

Andrew Brown is a fourth year Forestry student and is a member of Men Against Sexual Aggression (MASA).

CHSR-FM provides programming for women

CHSR-FM, 97.9 is planning a day of music and information focussing on violence against women and what all members of society can do to prevent what happened at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989. Beginning at 12:00 noon on December 2nd the special four hour broadcast will cover everything from men working against male violence to self defence for women. Music and remembrance of those women wounded or killed in Montreal.

CHSR-FM Campus Radio has several programs designed specifically for the listening pleasure of females. (Guys, if you want to gain knowledge concerning women's issues, it would be good for you to tune in as well.) Listed below are the dates, times, names and descriptions of the various programs.

Monday 1:00 pm  
51%  
Programming produced by, for and about women. This is an international show received on tape from Russel State College.

Wednesday 7:00 pm  
Virtual Reality  
Jenn Brayton takes a bite out of misogyny and spits out feminism.

Friday 1:00 pm  
Wings

# Time to stop taking media violence for granted

CARLA EKY LAM

One evening this summer as I was watching the maritime news, I was significantly appalled by a story about a traffic crisis in Beijing. A cyclist was captured on video as he was struck by a vehicle speeding down a major, multi-laned highway. The shot was incredibly graphic as his rag-doll body was followed, almost comically, by the lens. I felt ill inside: I had just witnessed the death of a person a continent away. A life was taken and where was the respect? The newscaster generically branded it a as problem of traffic management in the Chinese capital city. If I felt sick, how must his family feel? How could we, as humans, be so alienated from our own family? I can still remember the image of the cyclist being tossed and I don't think I will ever forget it; it symbolizes to me how far we have come from life-Creation, from ourselves and from each other.

Later in the summer, as I was walking with a friend, we began discussing horror movies and violent imagery. We all have tales to tell—certain unblinking images, events from movies (mostly violent)—the kind that keep your eyes open when you're alone at night. She shared with me the explanation of a common friend who refused to have violent media viewed in her house. It had to do with psychology and science, and it makes perfect logical and experiential sense to me. Scientists have proven that light rays and sound vibrations do not cease to be, rather they deflect. Basic scientific principles tell us that the universe consists of form and matter, and that no matter ceases to exist, but merely changes form. We, as spectators, consume violent imagery (in mass quantity) that is retained. We see, we hear, we feel (those who have managed to resist desensitization.) When the viewer is barraged by a phalanx of violence through TV, movies, visual advertisements (of all sorts), video games etc., s/he becomes conditioned by and to a violent world. We can't help but internalize the violence we see. For example, is there one of you who can't recall a violent image generated by some visual media source?

Of course not, we all can—visual media is at the apex of most social interaction. If you think about it, most people would be hard pressed to converse or interact in a social situation without some initial focus on media (usually visual i.e. film/TV). We've learned to communicate artificially, technologically. For example, I know groups of people who gather to play video games with nary a word spoken in between. Paradoxically, both the danger and the appeal of media is its homogenizing effect. Visual media [translate: visual violence] is something we all have in common. (It's the great American way!) How many have not heard "Go ahead, make my day!" or such well-worn one-liners as "I'll be back!" (Schwarzenegger) or "I come in peace, you'll go in pieces!" (Dolph Lundgren)? Less ominously perhaps, consider the innumerable conversations begun — "Have you seen the latest episode of the Simpsons/Friends?"

Apocalyptically, violent imagery is in no short abundance. As a matter of fact, "It's estimated that by the end of elementary school, the average child has already witnessed 8,000 screen murders and more than 100,000 acts of TV or film violence; these numbers double during the teenage years" ("Healing Visual Violence" New Age Journal, Brenda Peterson, 93).

And while violent imagery effects us all, it targets men. For example, the Action/Adventure flick is psycho-socially engineered to men in valorization of stereotypic masculinity. Mainstream media (that which you're most likely to see—even when you're not looking for it) reinforces the current status quo, securing oppressive gender roles and legitimizing ancient injustices. More specifically, visual violence is meant to be wish-fulfillment for the average man. Entertainment exploits the fantastic, but in order for there to be an appeal it must be a valid assumption of the fantasy of the spectator (in order for identification to occur which is what, on a very basic level, makes a narrative successful). Men

(yes, the protagonists of most mainstream media are male) can kill the enemy, the foreigner, the "other" and fuck whomever he pleases. (Note the close correlation between kill and fuck). Physical conflict, death and desecration are intimately tied up with sex. It's no coincidence that in the Empire Theater variety of narrative (Classic Hollywood Cinema) the protagonist is most always male with either a peripheral female lead who serves primarily as distraction, goal or comic rival to him. In the genre of the Action/Adventure movie, the male protagonist is characterized by predatory aggression (at worst) and virile killing efficiency (at best) but is usually a combination of the two. In visual media men are repeatedly portrayed in positions of offense and abuse, while women are depicted as victims (albeit sexually attractive ones), ultimately in need of the aid or companionship of a male figure. Their sexual appeal is their greatest weapon or defense.

How many movies/narratives can you think of that involve murder, mayhem and/or center around some crisis situation requiring a violent rescue mission? Maybe the better question is how many can you think of that don't? Generally, the rest involve romance, love and sensitivity and are safely denounced "chick flicks." The patriarchal and misogynist nature of society both writes and (re)writes by visual violence. We may confirm this fact by examining the politics of the Action Flick Vs. the Chick Flick. The "chick flick" typically portrays women as gossiping, laughing, healing, heterosexual women momentarily sans man. It generally focuses on relationships, romance, feelings and philosophic rather than lethal frolicking. Not necessarily more intellectual than the action flick, the "chick flick" is revolutionary for the simple novel fact that it has as its protagonists, women; and this is sufficient to have it quarantined and boycotted by all potent men. (There is such a strong distaste and/or outright hostility for anything considered effeminate that it's quite shocking most people haven't figured it out yet.) Generally, because the "woman's film" doesn't center on the act of killing, murder, violence or aggression by the part of the protagonist, it is eschewed by the people who still bring home the bigger cheques.

Perhaps what's most revealing and distressing is that the top box office hits are all about violence of one sort or another. The titles do not mask the content; yet most of us "relax" and "unwind" at the end of the week to some rape, pillage, death and destruction. Then we watch the news and "tsk tsk" that M.L. has shot up 14 women and that rape is an hourly occurrence...

Most of us "relax" and "unwind" at the end of the week to some rape, pillage, death and destruction. Then we watch the news and "tsk tsk" that M.L. has shot up 14 women and that rape is an hourly occurrence. What do we expect to come out of a warrior culture that tells us that all that is feminine is to be desecrated conquered or "fucked"—and all that that implies? For as long as we provide sacrificial offerings to an all pervasive masculine ethos—symbolic, literal or otherwise—we will continue to kill women, life, and our chance for unity. Your complicity in a cult of visual violence makes you as guilty as Marc Lepine. "If we teach violence, death is our destiny; if we teach compassion, we connect with what is most divine" ("Healing Visual Violence" 164).

We are surrounded by visual violence and it is making us sick. Visual violence is inescapable. (From the news, to the porn shop.) We can kill and laugh at the same time, stopping occasionally to have explosive sex. It's all fun and games until we have a social crisis and we're made to look for the source of the social malaise. We have to learn to overcome the ego—step outside ourselves; question why most of our "entertainment" centers around violence, murder, mayhem, abuse—even if some source of emasculated salvation is the finale. We don't feel anymore; it's easier to kill than talk. "M.L. obliterates 14 women" is only one headline of a vast reserve and has served only to whisper into our shell-shocked and bullet-deadened ears.

The death scenes and sounds that we consume become a part of us. They are absorbed into our walls, our homes and our psyches. Visual violence is not gone when the lights come up, the TV is off, or your eyes are closed. It lives on latent, full of potential and momentum beneath a placid surface. The hunger for death we're nurturing is implacable.

## What can you do?

- 1) Resist the mainstream
- 2) Support local film/art endeavors that resist mainstream (malestream) narratives and cinematic format.
- 3) Think for yourself.
- 4) Listen to the news don't watch it.
- 5) Entertain yourself. Create your own art.
- 6) Be a conscious consumer: know what you're watching, listening to and buying. Refuse that is insulting to nature and life—yours and others.
- 7) Be aware of your own biases and correct them. Be aware of the ways in which your choices promote (images of) death over life.

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