

# Experimental fest showcases underground acts

BY NEIL FRASER

There was something slightly blasphemous yet somehow fitting about holding the second annual Halifax Experimental Music Festival at the Church on North street. Blasphemous because a style of music that sets out to de-construct the traditional forms and rearrange them in patterns hitherto unthought of was being performed in a building that is a symbol of all things traditional.

We arrived at the North Street location just as Ellipsis were taking the floor. It was an informal setting; most of the concert-goers were seated at tables, while some were forced to sit on the floor. There was space set aside to the left of the stage for dancing,

above which scenes from the stage were projected.

Ellipsis are a local collective who's live incarnation consisted of a man with a really big hat, a man with a clarinet, and a man with little flashlight glasses. In front of them was an array of electronic equipment which the players used to make a variety of sounds and noises. Watching the men with the funny headgear pressing buttons and adjusting knobs made me feel like I was in a "Dr. Who" episode, and I kept expecting the Tardis to appear on stage.

The sounds they made combined to form an aural soundscape; atmospheric, moody, and dark. Having just arrived, I found the ten-minute-long journeys into sound quite interesting, but for some of the audience who had been there for three

hours already, it seemed quite tedious.

Headlining the festival was The Dinner is Ruined from Ontario. This trio is promoting their latest album, (*Elevator Music*) for Non-Claustrophobic People, which was released on the Sonic Unyon label. This is a band that knows how to have fun on stage. At the end of the night, the stage was littered with various toys and noise makers used throughout the set. For most of the night the band consisted of a guitar player and two drummers, but this changed occasionally; sometimes a band member would leave his instrument for something more interesting, and another would take his place.

It is hard to describe the sound of a band when you have nothing to compare it to. The closest thing I can think of is

trying to tune in a transistor radio on a jumbo jet as it hurtles towards a densely populated city; very chaotic and surreal, with a hint of impending doom. Once you let yourself slip into that frame of mind, it is very enjoyable.

There is a certain form of integrity inherent in this style of music, because the performers know they will never gain mass acceptance, and there is no

way they could be in it for the money. You could only perform this sort of music if you have a deep love for the art.

It is good that there is a festival to showcase experimental music as there are very few venues around to support it. Here's looking forward to the third Halifax Experimental Music Festival.

## Grace, Addiction, and Rain

BY CHRIS DAY

On Friday, Wide Mouth Mason, Dayna Manning and the Grace Babies brought the dormant Grawood to life as part of the *Belvedere Rock* fall concert series. The three acts created an unforgettable night.

The Grace Babies kick-started the night around 10pm. They faced the almost impossible challenge of reminding the loud crowd they were at the 'Wood for a concert, not just to drink. They succeeded with most but not all of the crowd and played a technically solid performance.

Dayna Manning appeared on stage carrying a broom and she proceeded to sweep the area in front of the stage. She then invited the crowd to come sit on the now clean floor in front of the stage. The crowd accepted her invitation and seemed to be awed by Manning's beautifully mellow set. To the disappointment of some, Manning didn't play her new release "My Addiction" or any of her upbeat songs.

Wide Mouth Mason took to the stage and brought the crowd to its feet. The band played all their biggest hits, including "Sister Sally", "Mary Mary" and "Midnight Rain", with incredible intensity and energy. All their songs are powerful when listened to on CD, but can't hold a candle to the excitement and life the artists give them while live on stage.

If it is even possible, the band looked like they enjoyed the

performance more than the crowd. Earl Pereira (bass) and Shaun Verault (guitar) went head to head on many songs, with competing solos, and it looked as though they were playing to a stadium crowd and not just the packed Grawood.

After a brief lighting fiasco almost ended the already long set, the band returned and took requests from the crowd. As requested, the band played Jimi Hendrix's "Castles Made of Sand" with Verault giving an amazing guitar

solo that equalled Jimi's own performance. It is impossible to fully describe how good Verault's performance was, my friends drooled over it and I would have believed it was actually Jimi playing (I also would have believed anything by that point of the night).

The band's final few songs demonstrated their impressive range and diversity, moving from their own blues rock to the classic 60s rock & roll.

### CD REVIEW

Volume I  
Dayna Manning  
EMI Music

Combining seemingly effortless talent, heart-wrenching emotion and contagious melodies, Dayna Manning has certainly bowled audiences over with her first album *Volume I*. There's nothing specific about Dayna Manning that makes her stand out from the plethora of folk singers out there, but yet she achieves this original, distinctive sound. Perhaps, being a collector of riotous chick-folk music, my opinion is biased, but this CD did not leave my CD player for a week.

The most obvious property of *Volume I* is Dayna's hypnotizing, sweet but powerful voice. Her vocal talents are best demonstrated in songs like "Walk on the Moon", which is a breathtakingly powerful ballad.

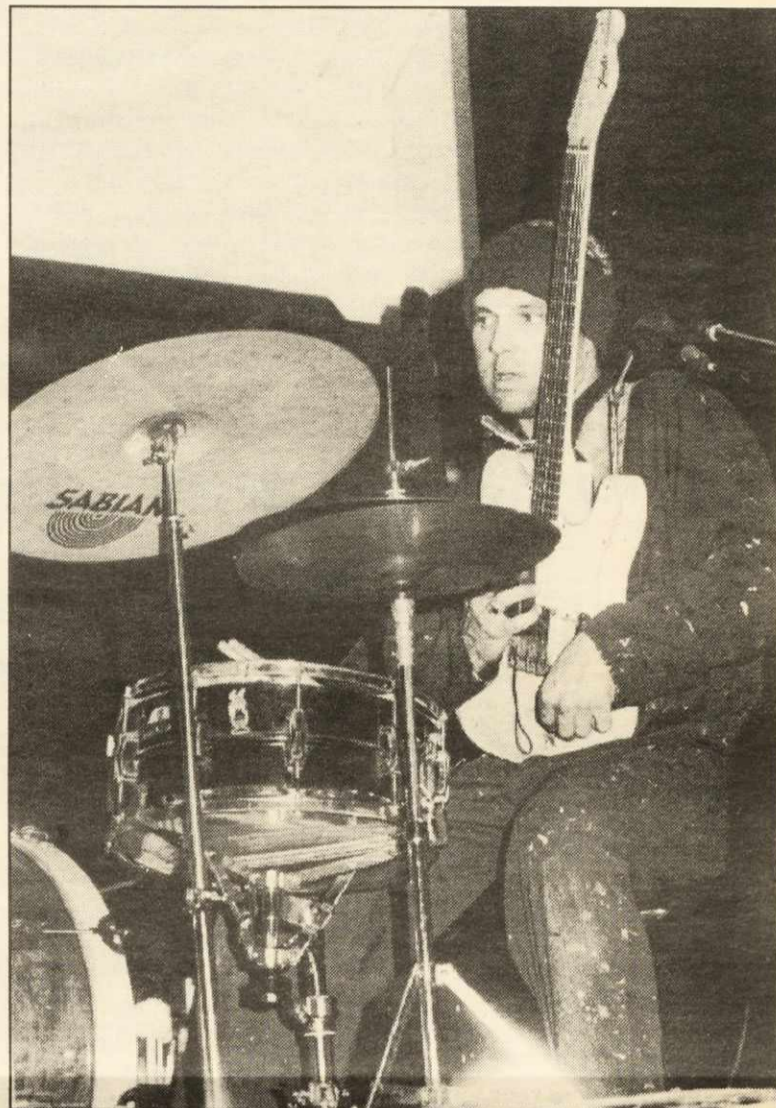
Although some might describe Dayna Manning as "mellow", her music is diverse in that each song is an individual statement and there doesn't seem to be a restrictive "Dayna Manning Sound". Her lyrics are poetry, void of cheesy rhymes — thank goodness.

The one small tiny itsy-bitsy annoying thing in this album is the way Dayna sings some of her vowels. As anal as this sounds, the track "End of the Game" always gets skipped because of the bothersome way she sings the "a" sounds. Still, if the worst thing that can be said about an album is vowel pronunciation, how bad can it be?

*Volume I* was a pleasant musical surprise and seeing in her in concert at the Grawood was a real treat. This chick kicks ass.

JANET FRENCH

LOOK FOR MORE CD REVIEWS ON PAGE 14.



The Dinner is Ruined rocks the Church. Photo by Ryan Lash

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EDMONTON	—	20:10	—	—	—	—	—
CALGARY	18:35 <sup>2</sup>	—	—	18:35	—	—	—
TORONTO	10:35 13:05	14:10 17:50	14:40	15:40 23:15	12:00	10:10	22:10 <sup>1</sup>
ST. JOHN'S	—	12:55	—	18:20	—	—	—

<sup>1</sup> Ends Oct 12    <sup>2</sup> Ends Oct 19

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