

Entertainment



I remember a few years ago, at the CHSC, watching a band that confirmed my doubts about the great risks of making mainstream music a career choice. This band, "Flock of Seagulls" (where did they get that name) as far as I can remember, were big in about 1982. On the laurels of basically one tune (you remember, "And I raann, I ran so far away ay ay!"), they were rocketed to mega band status, and even played the Police Picnic in that same year. They had a cultish sort of following for a few years and that basically irritating melody echoed at junior high school dances and eventually ended up following that generation into the college circuit where the dust is still occasionally blown off the old disc to initiate screams of almost orgasmic intensity from girls and boys alike who would rather remember a simpler, tax, food, work and sexually transmitted disease-free existence than deal with the realities of getting old and responsible enough to contribute to society (something I like to refer to as the "Soft Cell/Tainted Love" syndrome).

I realized, as the band wound up into their geriatric version of their one and only hit, that in the music business, sooner or later you're going to take a fall. It's a lot like relationships and death. You might get, as did "Flock of Seagulls," a hit. But you will spend the rest of your slowly degenerating career trying to claw your way back. Some make it. Most don't.

It was as I stood and watched 54 40 on Tuesday night that I feared for them the same fate as so many before them.

It was, comparably, a great performance by the band (compared to the last few times they were here, when my predecessor, Steve "Uncle Stevie" Griffiths was forced to write below a photo of the per-

formance: "Come on, sunshine! You can do it..." 54 40's lead singer in a futile attempt to crack a smile). Energetic, expressive, and with a kick-butt mix at comfortably ear-splitting volume, the band played and interacted with both each other and the audience with enough sincerity that they actually looked like they were trying, and might even be having a little fun.

However (this is the point at which I become one man with one opinion), there are a few things that disturbed me. This band has been touring on the same album for what is it now, three years? They do have a new album coming yes, but news has it they are going to put out a kind of "best of" conglomeration as a stall until the recording is done. Now, I must admit (sorry, that sounds like it bothers me - it doesn't) that I thoroughly enjoyed both of the first two albums. "Show Me" in particular was a wonderfully produced work that I think created much of the distinctiveness in 54 40's sound, giving them that hard edge and distinctive vocal lines. "Fight For Love" was, for me anyway, a big disappointment. Over production spoiled the griminess of earlier recordings, and smoothed out the coarseness of the lead vocals. Song topics degenerated and it felt like contractual obligation—quality stuff. But, again, this may in fact be viewed by large sections of the population as progressive - like I said: one man, one opinion.

Back to the actual show. The system (sound, lights, etc.) was not as big as the last few times 54 40 has been here. They dropped from Eastern Tour Tee to using a local (Moncton) sound company. Interesting. The sound, however, was excellent. The new tunes that they played had interesting moments in them, and, again, I was impressed by their relative liveliness and spirit.

Major changes, however, must be made in the whole attitude about opening bands. What is it that says an opening band has to have a crummy mix and one-third the volume of the headliners? What are they, afraid of competition? It must be written in concert law somewhere because venues religiously do this without exception. So the sad fate of what has become Fredericton, and thus the university's favorite crew, The Hype, who were treated to what could very well be the worst mix I can remember since the autoharp trumpet duo who played by my metro station when I live in Montreal. Bad, abysmal stuff. Suffering through this little travesty, the band worked hard and played well. Their original stuff (the band is in the infancy stage of the greatest possible evolution), has catchy melodies, and the Guitars work has a nice, strange edge to it. Troy Cloney, after so many years of sounding "like" someone, has finally been given a chance to find a sound for himself, and with his range, that sound is distinctive.

So, I'll look forward to 54 40's new release with apprehension and nervousness, praying to the gods of sensibility that the producers don't decide that a *Glass Tiger* image would be better for the band than letting them do what they do, and commend them for an energetic show that made me believe that they enjoy what they do. 2) *The Hype* got shafted on the whole deal, and stumbled, as all will, on the unwritten "you are pond scum" by-law of the world-wide "opening band" Act. Don't let it stress you out, guys - *The Beatles* suffered the same way.

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