

Big things in sight

Big Wreck taking new found success in stride

BY KARAN SHETTY

Toronto-based rock group Big Wreck isn't your typical band.

Instead of running away to the States to "make it big", the band, which is three quarters American, decided to head up north in what turned out to be a very shrewd move. Indeed, Big Wreck is already a huge success in Canada and success south of the border is within their sights.

"We're working very hard," says guitarist Brian Doherty, who maintains that the band's focus is on conquering North America, not just Canada. "We played about 300 shows in the States and we've

toured twice around Canada."

A lot has been made of the band's rich musical background - all members having attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston. Even more has been said about the band skipping classes to jam and play gigs. Doherty insists that attending college was a fruitful experience in spite of skipped classes, as the musical environment of which they were a part helped them hone their skills as musicians. "Also," he adds, "it's always good to get the basics."

Big Wreck is currently on a big college tour - doing all the necessary grunt work required to snare new listeners. Asked whether the band prefers the larger venues

as opposed to the smaller university crowds, Doherty responds by saying that it really depends on how participative the crowd is.

"Big venues are great but you can have an equally great time in a small room with 50 people," says Doherty.

With a MuchMusic Video Award nomination already under their belt, the band is not letting their sudden success obscure their goals as musicians. "We're just taking all this in stride," says Doherty, who sees all the new found recognition as a step towards bigger things.

Big Wreck will play the McInnes Room in the SUB Saturday, Jan. 30.



WRECKIN' THE JOINT: Big Wreck soon to pose in McInnes Room.

From Slutt to country

Professor nominated for music award

BY KAREN PARKER

Professor Mick Sullivan has been nominated for a prestigious award. However, it has nothing to do with his work as an Associate Professor in Dalhousie's Psychology Department, nor his job as the clinical director of Fenwick Psychological Services. It has to do with folk music.

Sullivan recently recorded the CD *Common Ground* with fellow musician Stephen Read (a graphic designer by day), and the effort has garnered the two men a nomination for a 1999 East Coast Music Award in the country music category.

The recording was spawned from a series of jam sessions aboard *The Acadia*, the ship on which Read lives. The jams were host to such accomplished folk musicians as Dave Stone, Margo Carruthers, Melanie Ross and Cheryl Gaudet, and became known as the "Acadia Saturday Nights". The success of these sessions inspired Sullivan and Read to record an album.

The result was *Common Ground*, featuring five songs written and performed by Sullivan, and five written and performed by Read. Although the two have been making music together for years, they've found that when it comes to songwriting they each prefer to write by themselves, resulting in an effort that is collaborative, and yet at the same time separate.

An impressive list of musicians backs up the duo on the CD, including Dave MacIsaac,

Doris Mason and Jeremiah Sparks. Their talent helps create what Sullivan calls a "country gospel-ish kind of sound".

Common Ground was produced by Bruce Jacobs, who has worked with artists such as The Rankins and The Barra MacNeils. Sullivan and Read had originally set out to make a pure folk album on

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their own, but Sullivan says Jacobs was a valuable advisor in making the CD successful.

"He told us if we wanted to appeal to a wider market, it would be good to give the CD a bit of a country sound," said Sullivan of the producer.

The "gospel-ish country sound" obviously paid off, giving the tandem their ECMA nomination. Still, Sullivan says his music is far from the typical Top 40 Country of today. When a local country station told him *Common Ground* had been put into their rotation, he listened for a couple hours in the hopes of hearing it. He didn't hear himself on the radio, but he did draw some conclusions about most country music.

"Guys are always whining about their women leaving them... women are always leaving... and everyone drives pick-ups trucks,"

Sullivan said.

Sullivan grew up in Quebec with the ambition to become a professional musician. Upon completing CEGEP he joined a heavy metal band called Slutt ("with two Ts," he's quick to point out). But after two-and-a-half years of performing, the group had made little progress, and Sullivan decided to pursue higher education.

He completed his undergrad at McGill and did graduate work at Concordia University. He then worked for several years in Ottawa before coming to Dalhousie in 1990 to join their Clinical Psychology program. He currently teaches undergrad Social Psychology, as well as some PhD level courses.

Even though he now has a successful academic career, Sullivan hasn't totally given up on the music biz. He helped run the now defunct "Get Foked" nights at the Grawood.

Although Sullivan's busy schedule doesn't give him much time to tour or play regular gigs right now, he and Read are planning to perform at some local folk festivals this summer. Their recent nomination has also inspired them to record another album.

For now, if you'd like to hear Professor Sullivan's music, *Common Ground* is available at most local record stores.

Sadly, Slutt didn't put out too many albums.

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