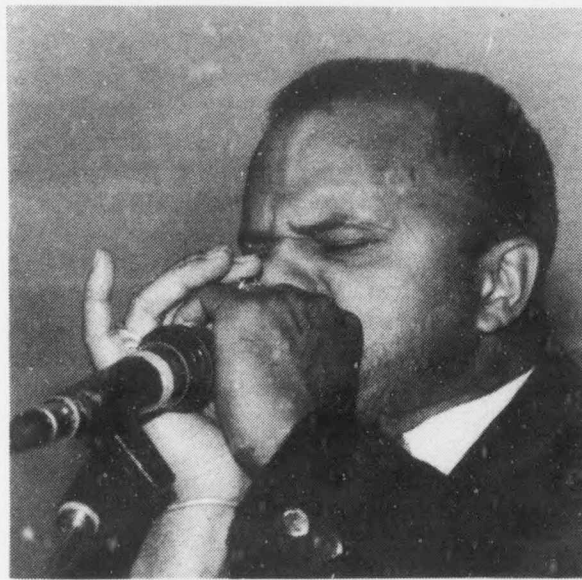


Entertainment

Wrinkly and Stagnant but Having a Good Time

I am increasingly of the opinion that the mechanism of the human memory and imagination system is based on the melting and thawing of water. It stands to reason that in a meaty sack consisting mostly of H₂O, memory and creativity processes and particularly storage should be carried out on the borderline between the solid and liquid phases of water. If we assume that the short term memory exists as liquid, like a reflecting pool, then what we see and absorb is reflected, processed, and then either sublimed into gas where it escapes gently, wafting out of the sinuses (hence the term "in one ear and out the other"), or flash-frozen and filed in large sheets in a kind of Russian factory trawler of the mind. We recall visual memory simply by pulling out the labeled file and thawing it out to reflect once again. Over time, of course, experience and age as well as relative and congruent memories, along with the repeated thawing and freezing, create potholes and fissures that are filled using leftover ice from shattered previous memories, and odds and ends that update the surface and shine it up for use.



I am spending the next three or four days periodically sticking my head in my parent's deep freeze so that I can keep the temperature down far enough to preserve all the shards and pieces and debris and slush left over from the second annual Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival.

The head of security for the Beaverbrook Hotel, long after the bar should be closed, stands up with the band in his crested jacket and pressed tie and belts out a heavy blues number, wailing on his harmonica to a standing, cheering crowd.

An important thing happened. The communication between artist and audience, between audience and audience, and between artist and artist blossomed and unfurled into an explosion of civic culture and that unique aspect of the human species, being the ability, but more importantly the desire and need, for community. A revelling in Maritimity, and a gathering of representatives from all chosen paths to feed on one another's enjoyment of staggering diversity became an education in the context of that one memory that remains fluid, and marks the common ground between all the forms that human beings take; music.

Music is a powerful vehicle but need not communicate revelation or even insight. Music communicates emotion in the most direct and identifiable way, and knows both universality and remarkable individuality.

A teacher marches into King's place with fifty little human beings trailing behind her in a line like an enormous charm bracelet to sit in a wide-eyed and mesmerized semi-circle in front of a Dixieland band. One of the musicians teaches them how to pretend to play the saxophone and soon the entire menagerie is a sea of happily wiggling fingers and little cheeks puffing out as if blowing up tiny balloons.

The vindictive, boreal consciousness of New Brunswick's long slide into the blinding white abyss of winter saw fit to grace Fredericton with four superb and remarkably different days. The sticky, mid-August haze of Thursday bled into the warm evening rain of Friday, and ended up with the intense brightness and sharp bite of Sunday afternoon. A veritable raison d'être created by this confusing, unexpectedly pleasant weather meant that each day took on a tone and flavor of its own, fueled by the wide variety of entertainment and the increasing expectation of the crowds that came back again and again.

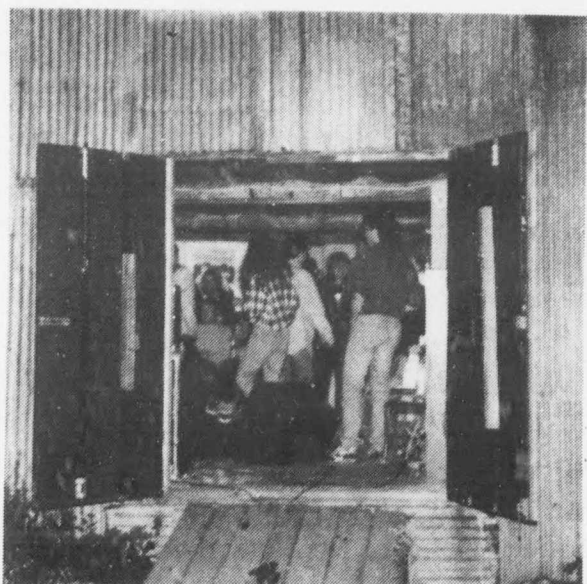


Largely because the aching need for sleep had begun to win the battle over the cattle prod-wielding paranoia of missing that particularly exciting moment by Saturday and Sunday, Thursday holds the clearest memories for me (though a quiet evening at the Dock on Wednesday with Long John Baldry, Holly Cole and Roger Howse will be a crystalline picture in my head for many years).

Four businessmen from out of town show up at the Dock Pub for a beer on a warm Wednesday night. Walking into the cool, heavy blues of Roger Howse's Newfoundland guitar, and noticing the likes of Long John Baldry looking on, they inquire as to what is happening. Upon being given a festival schedule, they cancel their flights for the following morning and stay until Sunday.

From the humid, festival of fun under the big blue tent, where Joe Murphy pumped out his graceful and foot-stomping Cajun blues and Jackson Delta took us back to the Mississippi until the crowd cheered for more and more, I bounced over to the Dock where Roger Howse banged and whanged and smoked and lilted just enough so that I didn't want to ever leave. But Theresa Malenfant waited over at Trina's for me. She patiently stalled until I made it through the line and then screamed at me the way Janis Joplin might if she had grown up on the North Shore. Being blown back outside, I collected myself and stumbled to The Cosmo where I was witness to the rantings of the deranged legend of blues, the one man still standing - Long John Baldry. To be so tall and so cool, it seems unfair somehow. At a slow crawl now, but being jabbed along by the moist, warm evening and that warm bath feeling that downtown Fredericton can have once in awhile (you want to stay for ever, but after awhile you start to get all wrinkly and stagnant), I found myself at the River Room with AKA, where Joe Murphy, Theresa Malenfant, and Roger Howse were relaxing by jumping up on stage occasionally to sing and play with the band the way one might use a wading pool on a hot summer day.

At a semi-abandoned warehouse in the wee hours of Monday morning, there is a pick-up band playing. Inside there are three people playing one keyboard, two people playing one set of drums, two people playing a bass, a guitar player, and everyone is singing. There is a chill in the air, but inside it is very warm.



Thanks again to everyone who had anything to do with the second annual Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival. Who loves ya baby? - Fredericton sho' nuff does.

Chris

