

Silver Dollar Rooms cashing in

By DAVID BINSTED

Who is Elliott Lefko, and what is he doing to Toronto's underground music scene? Some of you York University diehards may remember him from a few years back when he was an editor of *Excalibur* for three years (two as an arts editor, and one as editor-in-chief), or others may remember his Wednesday night specials downtown at the RPM club. Either way, what he's doing now is an extreme deviation from his activities in the confines of York and the dance floors of one of Toronto's trendiest bars.

Lefko is now managing the Waverly Hotel's Silver Dollar Rooms, promoting and booking alternative bands which otherwise wouldn't be able to find a venue to perform anywhere in Toronto. The Horseshoe Tavern, the Diamond Club, or even the El Mocambo are mere "surface underground" clubs in comparison with the newly renovated Silver Dollar Rooms, located at Spadina and Colledge.

Less than a year ago, the Silver Dollar was just another downtown strip joint where locals could spend their welfare or pension cheques on cheap drinks. But those days are now over, as The Silver Dollar is breathing with life again, establishing itself as the heart of Toronto's underground music scene.

The sign outside says "Dress Code in Effect," but when you get inside you wonder of what sort: anything black, denim, or leather seems to be the desired attire (shaker knits are out), and a pair of black leather boots wouldn't hurt either. However, this is *not* The Gasworks, this is a serious crowd here to see a show which promises to be like no other in Toronto.

As the crowd gets ready for things to start, the atmosphere becomes scary, but the excitement of being part of it compels you to stay. As time passes, the crowd gets uglier, and the Silver Dollar Room takes on a suspicious and mysterious mood. If it weren't for the three bulbous lights along the bar, the club would be downright sinister. By 10 o'clock on any night, there's limited standing room only, and the crowd becomes a solid mass of underground night crawlers.

The performer tonight is Lydia Lunch, a New York artist/poet who

came here to give air to her views on what's wrong with society. She grabs the microphone and immediately tells the sound man to "turn down the fucking monitors." She then launches into a 45-minute machine-gun commentary, taunting the crowd, daring hecklers to speak out. The performance ends around midnight and the stunned crowd attempts to find solace in their drinks, at the end of another "Snubb Tuesday" sponsored by Chris Shepard and Kevin Key.

Elliott Lefko has a lot more in his bag of mixed goodies to tantalize any crowd, with bands like Emmaculate Hearts, a New York-based band featuring Freddy Pompeii from The Viitones. Their music is similar to the glitter rock of The New York Dolls and they will be playing upstairs on March 11 and 12. Other bands include Alter-Natives who play a music called 'no-wave': mainly instrumental, with a solid jazz core (upstairs March 17).

There's also The Jellyfishbabies from Halifax, who are ardent Leonard Cohen/Bob Dylan fans, and their music is very melodically structured, but definitely in the rock vein (February 25). And on March 5 in the downstairs room, there will be a triple bill featuring Sons of the Desert, The Drones, and Bab, which promises to be an excellent sampling of some of the best in underground music.

Finally, for those who like their music a little tamer, Toronto's own Murray McLaughlin will play The Silver Dollar on March 18 and 19. McLaughlin makes reference to the Silver Dollar Room in his "Down By the Henry Moore."

The downstairs room has a totally different atmosphere than upstairs. It is newly renovated with new carpet and tables, and Lefko has had a compact stage built for the performances. There is a pool table tucked away in one corner, and a television in another, and the only indication of the Silver Dollar's seedy past is an elderly waiter quietly making his rounds.

The crowd here is a little more diverse than upstairs, anyone from suit and ties, to punks, to University students, to Iron Maiden look-alikes, all coming here to do their own thing. As this Friday night progresses, the punks take over the

back room, the police patrol through twice, and Ivan from Men Without Hats drops in for a beer. At varying intervals throughout the night, three different bands take the stage, making the sets appear almost improvisational, and very inspiring. If one looks hard enough, Lefko can be seen in his denim and leather, dragging a beer around, always keeping a watchful eye to make sure everything goes as planned.

The downstairs room of The Silver Dollar is where Toronto's weekend nightlife takes on a character of its own. On any weekend for a minimum cover charge (\$6.00), you can see no less than three different bands, all playing original material.

One positive aspect of The Silver Dollar Rooms, is that there is already a sound system there, complete with sound-boards, speakers, and seven different in-house soundmen. When a band comes to play, they are able to cut out many of their overhead expenses, such as renting a truck, hiring roadies, setting up lighting, and so on. Bands may get paid \$2000 a week at other clubs, but after expenses, each member may end up making about \$50. "Bands can simply come here and plug in," said Lefko. This enables Lefko to pay the bands less, give them maximum exposure, and in the end, create a high turnover of talent.

Back in the late '70s and early '80s, almost all clubs hiring bands wanted top-40 cover material. The prerequisite for playing at The Silver Dollar is that all the material must be original. This emphasis is part of a developing trend over the past couple of years, and it is making for a healthier state of mind within the music industry.

Looking at the big picture, Lefko hopes that by the end of this summer he will have both rooms operating six days a week. The crew which works there are all young, aggressive, and most importantly, dedicated to Lefko.

Lefko has taken what was once considered the norm for underground music, and redefined the standards set by other local clubs. Whether or not the club will be able to build a reputation for itself remains to be seen, but if these past couple of months are any indication, The Silver Dollar Rooms may shine one more time.

Satire outrages Carleton U. students

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mad that I left it on the table and apparently he took it off the table." That evening the University ombudsman contacted the Dean of Architecture who revoked the use of the Architecture Pit for the reading. The media were contacted. The following day (the scheduled day of the reading) Fishbayn, CUSA President Bruce Haydon, and an estimated 80 supporters—some holding bristol board sheets saying: "This is not satire"—and a CBC crew awaited the arrival of the authors in the Architecture Pit. They did not show up. "If they really wanted to write a book that would appeal to people who find sexism appalling," said Fishbayn, "we're the audience they are looking for, and they should have come and defended the book." When asked if perhaps the authors were intimidated, Fishbayn responded, "We weren't armed or anything."

At this time Fishbayn distributed leaflets attacking the *Guide*:

This is not satire. If this book is an attempt by its authors to "satirize the sexist and misogynist ways in which most men treat women in our society," it fails miserably. Ironically, what it does do is perpetuate the misogynist and sexist attitudes and behaviours to which its authors purport to be opposed.

When the leaflet was distributed, Fishbayn's opinion of the book was based upon the poster excerpt and a brief look at the book proper during



LOVECRAFT sells 25 to 30 inflatable dolls weekly.

the CUSA Council meeting. After the demonstration, she purchased a copy from the authors.

A complete reading did not alter Fishbayn's opinion of the book. "I thought the introduction was very tongue-in-cheek," she said. "I didn't believe it. I thought it was making fun of feminists. Obviously, they're not encouraging the adoption of inflatable mistresses, but what it is is a diatribe against real women. They [the dolls] don't get wrinkles like real women; they don't get fat and sloppy like real women; they don't

talk back. I will accept on good faith that they meant it to be satire. It is not that though, it sucks."

Fishbayn says that she has phoned a number of campuses in Ontario and Quebec to warn them about the book. Rafael Barreto-Rivera, the Director of Bookstores at York has said that although *A Gentleman's Guide to The Inflated Mistress* has yet to be ordered, it may be in the bookstore this month. Barreto-Rivera did not volunteer an opinion of the book preferring to "let the book speak for itself."

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