

Hip's opening act will rip your heart out

by Nobu Adilman

They can rip an ass off a hole, they can turn mush into mould, they can fry without oil, they can thrash without a skateboard. They are independent survivors of the not-always supportive Canadian music industry.

They do not fit into the stereotype of your typical "Upper Canadian," i.e. late-night discussions weighing the pros and cons of Gore-Tex are probably not a regular occurrence (just a hunch). They have released a few cassettes, seven full-length recordings, a couple of split singles (one with the Asexuals and another with Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet covering The Diodes' *Tired of Waking Up Tired*) made a bunch of videos, had a live broadcast coast-to-coast on *Brave New Waves* in 1989, have toured the country more times than the average Josephine, and much, much more.

They will rock your world, provided you give them a chance. They are Change of Heart and they are from Toronto, Ontario.

The reason I opted to write this article for the *Gazette* was because I know what Tragically Hip fans are like. To many Hip fans, the Hip is hip and that's it, baby. There is also the all-too-common "I'd rather have a couple of beers at home than see some sorry-ass opening act" syndrome.

So as not to exclude readers who are not going to the concert, I am also writing this to bring your attention to a band which feels new but has been around since 1982.

COH was the creation of a young Rob Taylor, 19, the bassist and principal lyricist, and an even younger Ian Blurton, 16, the guitarist and vocalist. Rob graduated from high school and Ian found himself with a lot of extra time on his hands whenever he skipped school. The time was there as were the instruments.

Since 1982 there have been several changes to the line-up. The

band had percussionist Mike Armstrong for awhile, but he took off as did the first drummer, Ron Duffy.

After 13 years the current line up looks like this: Ian Blurton on guitar and vocals, John Richardson on drums and vocals, John Borra on bass and vocals and Bernard Maiezza on keyboards, samples and noise.

The great thing is that a history of band members can be found in the thank-you section of the liner notes of *Tummysuckle*, their soon-to-be-re-released recording on the newly-established Lunamothe label. It is clear that COH have made a lot of friends in their long-lasting musical journey, something which is especially important when going without major label backing.

My introduction to the music of COH was last summer in two different places: on television during the Kumbaya festival concert at Ontario place, where they shared the stage with the Barenaked Ladies, and at a dance performance where they found themselves sharing the stage with flailing bodies, bathtubs and raw eggs.

Soon after, they came to the Pop Explosion right here in hipper-than-hip Haltown, tearing the foundations apart at the Brunswick Hall (now the Birdland Cabaret) and completely blowing the crowd away with their tough, raw, rockin' punk set.

Since then they've won the CFNY Modern Music Contest in Toronto, awarding them the sweet sum of \$100,000 to go towards the band's future. This gave them a per-



PHOTO: MIKE GRAHAM

fect opportunity to remix *Tummysuckle*, which was previously independently released and sold at shows. When the remix hits the stores, which should be sometime soon, on it you'll read that Lunamothe is releasing it and Virgin/EMI is distributing it.

Lunamothe is a record label, started up with the help of EMI/Canada, which has full control over everything from what their recordings sound like to how they are packaged and marketed. In December of last year Virgin also became a part of the deal with COH to have their recordings released internationally. By staying true to the independent direction COH has taken, they have found a way to get good exposure without selling out.

These boys, with the help of

Lunamothe manager Amy Hensenhoren, a whole sleuth of musician friends, constant crowd support, a few ma's and pa's and an encouraging financial handshake, have broken into a larger, crazier and perhaps more complicated administrative musical path.

What is the music like? I've listened to *Tummysuckle* quite a bit since the Pop Explosion, and if I had to sum it up in ten words or less I'd say this: smooth-rockin' guitar grooves, flowing songs which move naturally from one to the next, cool texturing of raw, biting rhythms and thick coats of synthetic, sampled noise, a voice which jumps, drones (when necessary), thrashes and coaxes, and lyrics which make sense. I haven't heard a lot of their earlier stuff but what I've heard has been

just as energetic and thoughtful.

This band has taken an alternate route to getting their sound out to their fans. The old cliché would say they have ridden on the road less-travelled. This current tour with The Odds and Tragically Hip is a landmark experience for the band, going from bar-size venues to arenas and especially the Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. You're from Toronto, you're in a band, you make it, you play the Gardens. It sounds like a fantastic late-great movie. Did I mention that they have just done a movie soundtrack for an independent filmmaker? Oh, that was a couple of weeks ago.

The band is hot, and I think will contribute a fantastic energy to the four-week tour across Canada. So look out for their *Tummysuckle* remix, and if you have tickets to the show on Thursday, take the time and see if you get a change of heart about missing opening bands.

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