

# ARTS

## Toasters and Suffer Machine rock Indie Festival

By SHAY SCHWARTZMAN

Smash, boom, twang: the first International Festival of Independent Music opened last week in Toronto with a wide array of talent to please any musical palate.

During the five-day event there were nearly 100 independent bands playing in more than 80 music venues across the city. These inde-

pendents — who are not signed to any major record labels — had a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of the Toronto music scene, known for being a top independent centre.

Two bands who hope to benefit from this exposure are Suffer Machine and The Toasters who played Lee's Palace last Thursday

night. Both played different types of music but the results were the same; it was a party.

Suffer Machine warmed up the crowd with blazing bass and drum beats, during a series of blistering, up-tempo songs. The five-piece band from London, Ontario has a mix of reggae and R&B influence in their music. The raspy, blues voice of its lead singer, Peter, was very much accentuated by the background vocals of the sax player.

Most of the band's songs are quite simplistic. The only person in the band who has any musical training is the keyboardist. Dreadlocked, bare-footed Peter who performs shoeless because it's "more comfortable," says, "although our songs are simplistic with a 4/4 beat we're trying to experiment with different beats because 4/4 time is boring. We're exploring new beats, african, reggae." This transformation was evi-

dent in their encore song, "I'll See You Tomorrow Again," a slower, softer song than the rest of the set.

"London doesn't have a big music scene . . . even the school (Western) does not facilitate the kind of music we play, it's very right wing," says Suffer Machine's lead guitarist. Because they do not find a large audience in their native city, the band is now touring to promote their only album, *Deprogram*, recorded independently on their own Burning Buffalo Music label three years ago.

"We're still trying to pay off the last album," says frontman Peter. "We're going out West this week, we're planning another album soon, it's probably going to be produced by the guy who did Jane Siberry's last album." The lead guitarist added that the newer songs are much more structured than the songs on the first album.

Suffer Machine played well and

the audience reacted favourably but they could not ignite the crowd like The Toasters. Their stage presence was not strong and they had two problems; they were the opening act and most people were there to see The Toasters.

The Toasters — a big, brassy, party band from New York — set the house on fire. From their first note to their final encore, the band had the crowd jumping, kicking and twisting to their high energy, up-tempo ska beat, their staple. But that did not stop them from treating the audience to a mix of rap, reggae, calypso and a cover version of Chuck Berry's classic "Johnny B. Goode," ska style.

The band, according to frontman Sean Dinsmore, "felt kind of loose" because they hadn't played in two weeks, but the audience didn't notice. He and fellow frontman Rob

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PARTY: A hot band and a rowdy crowd at the Festival.

## Eisenman Trio's jazz workshop

By FARHAD DESAI

"Speak quietly, swing hard."

That's how one York student described the Mark Eisenman Trio last Tuesday in the Fellows' Lounge of Atkinson College.

The jazz trio — featuring John Sumner (drums), Steve Wallace (bass), and pianist Mark Eisenman. Frontman Eisenman is a York music graduate who teaches a jazz workshop on campus.

The trio played a set of seven songs. Each performer was given an opportunity to wail away on their own.

The second song, "Alone Together," featured Steve Wallace - who plays with Oscar Peterson - on bass. He put on a bass clinic for the crowd by running his fingers on all parts of the fretboard, never letting the tone suffer. Even Sumner couldn't help but watch Wallace during his solos.

Sumner had a chance to exhibit his excellent drumming in "I Should Care." The group was very tight and Sumner's drum fills had the crowd shaking their heads.

The next song, George Gershwin's

"Embraceable You" had a beautiful piano introduction. As the bass and drums came in, toes automatically began to tap and heads started to swing.

They closed the show with a fast-paced blues number and left the crowd wanting more.

The group showed the audience why they won the 1987 Alcan Jazz Competition. They combined the energy and looseness of rock-and-roll with the discipline and technical attention of classical music. Simply, the Mark Eisenman Trio exemplifies jazz.

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