

PLACES TO GO

# Paranoia, rage and youthful folly

Boomers Bar and Grill

BY ANDREW SIMPSON AND JOHN CULLEN

John and I feel the need to make a confession. You see we were recently sent to cover a show for you, the Gazette reader. Unfortunately, our attempted coverage failed and we were sucked in by a savage, downward spiral into Halifax's subterranean social cesspool.

There are some stones in this world that are better left unturned, but having accidentally kicked one over, it is our duty to report to you on the variety of crustaceans we found lurking underneath.

You may never have been to Boomers Bar and Grill — we certainly hadn't — but the story you are about to read will reveal the horrible truth lurking behind its rather innocent exterior.

We had received instructions straight from the head office in Dartmouth (Nova Scotia), which were rumoured to have come straight from the *Giant Smooth* himself. *Giant Smooth* wanted us to cover a big name act at the Metro Centre. There would be tickets waiting for us at the box office and plenty of opportunity for swanky networking backstage (and maybe even some of those triangle sandwiches with the crusts cut-off).

Arriving at the box office John hastily demanded his "Fucking tickets now!"

"I need your name, sir," responded the woman behind the plate-glass.

"Listen," said John. "Do you know who the *Giant Smooth* is? I bet you don't because nobody does, but that doesn't mean we can take his power for granted..."

"Sir, if you'll just give me your name," interjected the woman.

"What, so you can report me to security," continued John. "No way, baby. You may think this young face looks naive, but I know what's going on. I don't want those bloodthirsty hounds nipping at my heels all night."

I realized that John and this dullard behind the glass had reached an impasse. Luckily a crude plan was hatching in my mind. I yanked him away from the window and spoke to him in a hushed voice.

"Look man, She's not gonna give us the tickets unless we give

her a name. Of course, giving our own names would be unthinkable, but what if we just made some up?"

"Are you suggesting I tell an untruth?" said John indignantly.

I was confused. "John, I thought you were the guy with the pathological aversion to the truth."

"Oh yeah," remembered John. And he swiftly returned to the window, oozing charm.

"I'm terribly sorry for my behaviour. I've had an awfully bad day; a few too many cups of coffee, I think. Anyways, you will be pleased to know that there are two tickets under the name Shagg, Rick Shagg — that's with two Gs. If you could just run along and get those tickets, we'll be able to get out of your hair."

Five minutes later the manager stepped up to the ticket window with a grim look on his face. "I'm sorry gentlemen, but there are no tickets for a Mr. Shagg.

If you would like, I can try and contact the *Giant Smooth*, but it's unlikely that we'll find him."

John didn't even hear the second part of what the man said. "What! No tickets! How can that be? I mean what, our mission...the *Giant Smooth*... Shagg...tickets...trouble, big trouble..." said John sobbing.

He was falling apart at the seams, the stress of working for the *Giant Smooth* was getting to him. He was slumped over the front of the ticket counter, his teary face pressed against the glass. I had to get him out of there — the bloodhounds were closing in.

We needed a safe place to hide,

a place to regroup, evaluate our situation and maybe have a beer — I was parched.

## Boomers — a haiku

*Life swimming past me  
Having a Mid-life crisis  
How 'bout Boomers, guys?*

Boomers is across the street from the Metro Centre. It was the first place we saw to get a drink, so we entered, even though the bar's name screamed receding hairlines, saggy flesh and minivans. I stopped John at the threshold of the establishment. "They have Video Lotto here. I love Video Lotto. Make sure I don't spend too much money. Can you do that?" I asked.

"Have I ever let your addictive personality roam free before?" John countered.

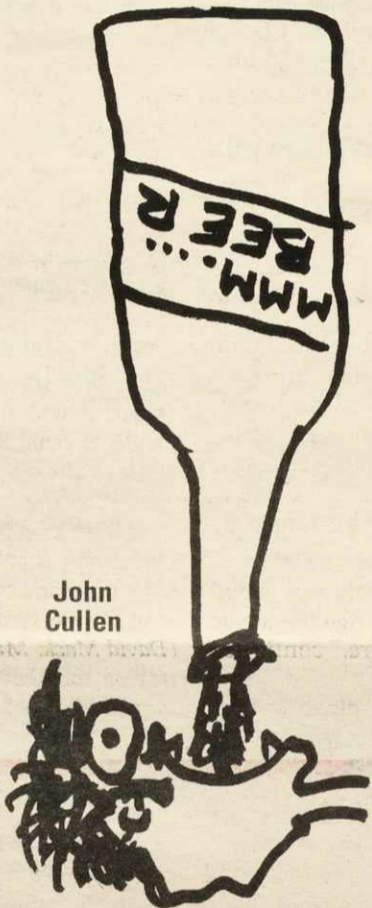
"Yes, you have, and I love you for it."

We entered to the thick, choking smell of Ben Gay and Old Spice. John immediately ran for the bar while I elbowed my way towards the poker screens. We were soon in fits of heavenly self-indulgence — me with my gambling, and John with his booze. We catered to our vices for the better part of an hour, absorbing the 50s jingles on the stereo and the sanitized, neon decor surrounding us. I zoned out on the disco ball for a while and had some powerful, polyester day-dreams.

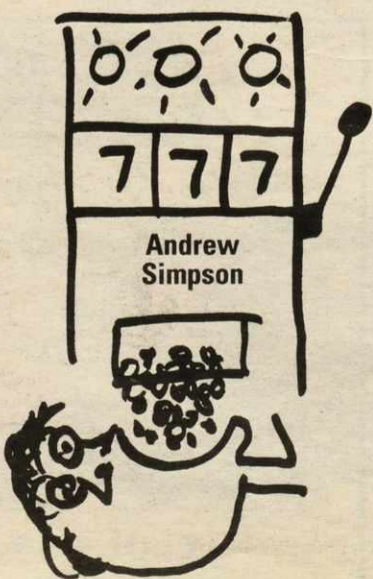
Suddenly it hit me — I was being watched. I looked over at John, who had the frightened look of a deer about to be crushed by the unfriendly front fender of a Mack truck. He knew the eyes were boring holes in the back of his skull. He was frozen.

From every corner of the room, the eyes stared out from wrinkled faces.

*Pale desperation  
Hunkered in a dingy bar  
Sucking at our youth*



John Cullen



Andrew Simpson

One of the more bold (bald?) of the male patrons lunged at John, but John's youthful athleticism enabled him to deftly sidestep the pathetic assault. John screeched with glee as the man landed, spread-eagle, on the floor.

"This place is getting hostile, let's flee before Yoda gets his second wind," said John.

"But I'm a hundred bucks up in poker! We can't leave now," I selfishly replied.

"Fuck the poker, addict. This

is about preserving our youth. Your measly C-note can't buy that back."

We quickly stole into the night, full of the arrogance of our limited years.

"Why do those dusters keep bothering us with all that talk about their life experience?" I said to John. "We already know everything worth knowing."

"Yeah..." said John, not really understanding. "Let's go find a good place to get drunk."

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