

# Jamming with the Wild Strawberries

BY ANDREA WARD

The Wild Strawberries are composed of husband-wife team Ken Harrison and Roberta Carter Harrison. They played two shows in the Halifax area last week. The Gazette caught up with the Wild Strawberries on Friday at the Crawood.

**Gaz:** How did you get started?

**Roberta:** Ken was writing songs for years and eventually started trying to record them, and I would sing back-up for him. We submitted one that he sang to a local radio contest actually before we got married but it wasn't Wild Strawberries, it was just our first little attempt at stuff. It got a good response, so that encouraged us. It was just sort of little encouragements along the way.

Then we started university for medicine and physio and didn't really like it that much, so we thought well, maybe this music thing would be a better option. We started the band with another friend, did some recording first, got some interest again on the same station, started playing live and doing the whole thing. That was about six years ago.

**Gaz:** So Ken, you are a doctor, and Roberta, a physiotherapist. How does the band fit in?

**Ken:** Yeah, my deal is that there is a lot of residents in psychiatry who moonlight at this one place and they will work maybe 2 shifts a month besides there day job. I work about two shifts a week when we're home.

**Gaz:** Are you touring all the time?

**Ken:** We tend to go in batches.

**Roberta:** We go two or three weeks out and then home for two and sometimes three weeks and then out again.

**Gaz:** Do you just tour across Canada?

**Roberta:** So far, we've only just begun in the States. We've done just over a week.

**Ken:** In the midwest. Minneapolis was as far as we got.

**Gaz:** What kind of response did you get?

**Roberta:** Good. People liked it, they had never heard of us, and were surprised. I don't know if touring is the way to take it to the masses down there because it's so huge.

**Ken:** We were surprised because a lot of bands we talked to said when they tour the States it's abysmal, but it was ok for us.

**Gaz:** Do you have any plans to promote your music heavily in the U.S. and Europe?

**Roberta:** Yeah, I would love to get to Europe. We aren't released there yet but we are working on that. With the next record, which we will be recording soon, hopefully we'll get a release in Germany. We are selling records actually in South Africa and Australia, on import. More than we should be. We'd love to get a distribution deal maybe for the next record there.

And in the States, it came out on Nettwerk USA which is basically their first foray into the States, cause they've had Nettwerk Canada for 10 years. They've had Sarah (McLachlan) doing amazingly well in the States, but that was on BMG. So

they've just begun their own label down there, and we are one of the first bands they've released. It's a learning experience for Nettwerk and for us. We are starting to get some radio time, which is great. Slow but sure.

**Gaz:** Is there a certain age group you are targeting?

**Roberta:** It has been restricted up until now with the club thing, and I think that's a downfall of the whole system where a band tours like crazy across Canada and misses that whole age group below drinking age. Given that, we have found that when we play accessible shows younger kids really dig it. With the video ("I don't want to think about it") having been played a lot this year, that certainly increases our fan base. Beyond that, I'd say it's a pretty wide age range.

**Gaz:** How did you get the name "Wild Strawberries"?

**Ken:** It's a film by Ingmar Bergman, and we saw the film just around the time we were looking for a band name. It's about this doctor who gets near the end of his life and starts to think maybe he should have done something else with his life.

**Roberta:** Sort of that "no regrets" thing. We had a few other names but we thought they were a bit pretentious.

**Ken:** "Wild Strawberries" is pretentious enough.

**Roberta:** It's pretentious, but if you don't know the film, it's still a great fruit.

**Gaz:** How do you feel when you are doing a show and you see the audience singing along with you?

**Roberta:** That's amazing! Absolutely.

**Ken:** It's awesome!

**Roberta:** And just a couple people singing last night was for...maybe the politeness of the rest of the crowd. It's a total rush to see people singing the words with you. It's great...any sort of energy that is out there in the room sort of comes back to the stage and then gets put back to the audience.

**Gaz:** When do you write your music? Do you have formal sessions, or do you just write when the inspiration hits?

**Ken:** I usually try to write in the mornings. On tour, I don't usually write very much. Back home I try to write as much as I can. I try to keep about a year ahead of our recordings.

**Gaz:** What kind of training do you have?

**Ken:** I went to a Mennonite school and they were really into choir and things. Music was a big deal there, it was equivalent to being on the football team in other schools. I had a piano teacher that recognized I was horrible at piano, so she started me in on composing. Bertie's starting to do some of the lyrics.

**Roberta:** We are starting to work together a bit, but I don't believe I have a gift for songwriting the way Ken does. I don't feel compelled to write anything.

**Gaz:** Any plans for the near future?

**Ken:** We will record the next record and then tour Canada again.

## Wild Strawberries

Vinnie's Pub

I promised myself I would not turn this article into a sick plot to receive sympathy. So, I will just mention the fact that I spent 2 hours on our wonderful public transportation system to get to Mount Saint Vincent University. I

hope it was for this reason, and only this reason, that a meagre 100 people attended the Wild Strawberries concert on October 3rd.

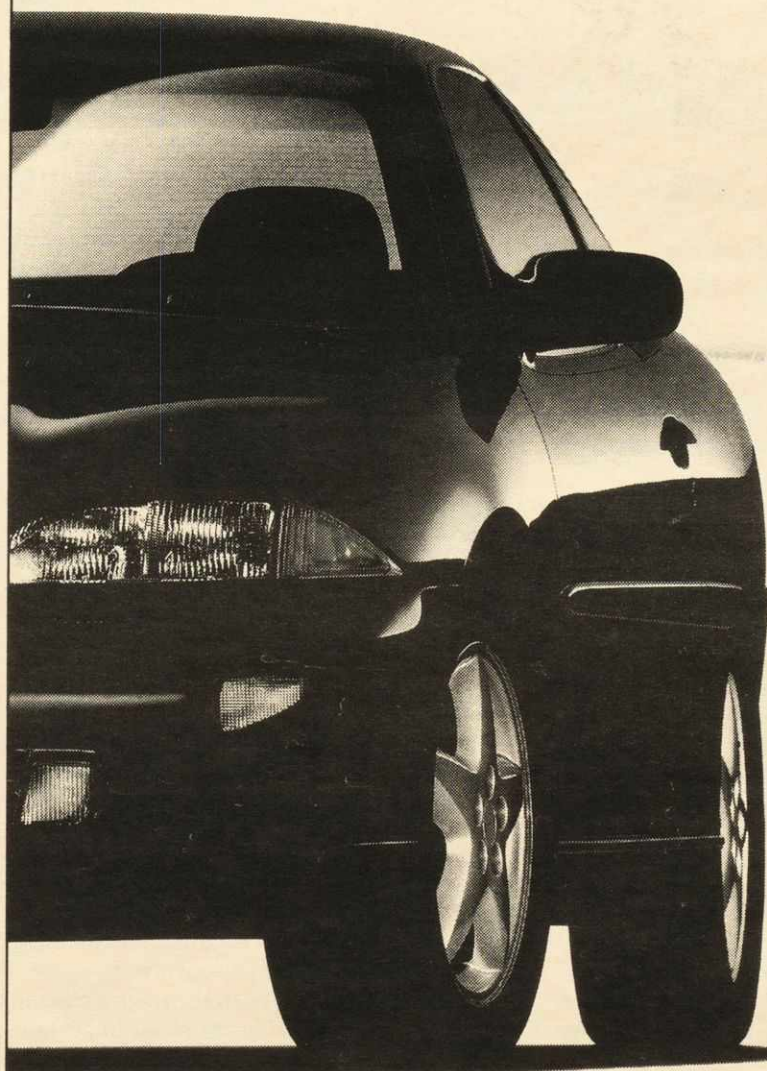
I'd like to start by saying how the Wild Strawberries rocked the crowd at Vinnie's Pub, but I can't. I'd like to be able to write about the amazing energy the crowd threw into dancing the night

away to fabulous songs like, "I don't want to think about it" but I can't do that either. As far as I'm concerned, the crowd at Vinnie's Pub got the concert date mixed up with their bible study group meeting.

As the evening progressed you could see the frustration of the band mounting.

Cont. p. 22: "Wild"

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