



ENTERTAINMENT

Eric's Trip - Conjurers of Chaos



Just your basic Eric's Trip montage featuring: Rick (top left), Chris (top right), Mark (bottom left) and Julie (bottom right)

Photos by Jason Haywood

by Jason Haywood
Brunswickan Entertainment

Until this Saturday night, I had never been to the Pyramid Warehouse. As I sat in the front room, sipping a cup of coffee, I was informed that this was the only heated room in the building. I decided to stay put and wait for Rick White, the lead singer and guitarist from Eric's Trip, and conduct the interview in some degree of comfort. Rick was very obliging and answered all my questions with enthusiasm. After the interview, I headed into the room where the concert was going on. I began to look around for angles to take pictures from. Once I realized the crowd was there to mosh, I decided to stay to the side of the stage.

Liquid Light 28 was the first band to play, but since I was conducting an interview while they were playing, I missed that part of the show. Orange Glass was the second band to take the stage. They hail from Moncton and were formed in February 1995. Ron Bates, the founding member, recruited the help of friends S'Appart (Bass), and Chris Flanagan (Drums), after recording

some demo material on his own. Their songs are powerful pop that deal with angst, frustration and joy. They put on an incredible show considering they hadn't rehearsed in some time. The songs feature a solid, heavy rhythm section and interesting tempo changes. By the end of their set, the audience was really digging their sound. Also, they're very interesting to look at. Ron Bates, the singer/guitarist, looked a bit like Buddy Holly, right down to the horn-rimmed glasses. S'Appart, the bass player, moved around the stage a lot and appeared to be really into the music. Chris Flanagan, the drummer, played with unremitting aggression and provided a stable basis for the other two band members.

When Eric's Trip took the stage, you could feel a change in the air. People were ready to mosh. By the end of the first song, the stage-diving and body surfing had begun. The band worked the audience into a frenzy with their masterful control of feedback and distortion. They could go up against Neil Young and Crazy Horse any day in this area. Underneath all the raw intensity, however, were some really great songs. Rick, singer/guitarist, and

Julie, bass/vocals, sing silvery harmony reminiscent of Neil Young and Nicolette Larson. Julie sang the lead on a few songs and has a very lucid and sweet-sounding voice. Chris, guitarist/vocals, also sang a few songs but they were harder to hear, perhaps because the microphone level was too low. Anyway, the audience and myself appreciated his songs also. Mark, drummer, kept his eyes fixed forward and really concentrated on providing a steady rhythm for the rest of the band to follow.

Whirlwind is probably the word that would best describe the show. It seemed like it was over not long after it had begun. Before I knew it, the band said their farewell, started to pack up their gear, and everybody filed out into the cold, November night. Usually, when I go to see a band, it is in a bar. This was a refreshing change. Unlike the bar scene, the audience came to hear music and have a good time; not to get drunk, socialize, and ignore the band. I think everybody got what they paid for—two hours of good, loud music. The more enthusiastic the audience got, the more the bands rocked. That's what live music should be.

A Trip down Eric's lane

by Jason Haywood
Brunswickan Entertainment

Jason Haywood: Are you still producing your own albums?

Rick: We wanted to do it all live this time...

JH: Yeah, that was my next question.

Rick: We couldn't do it [the album] at our apartment, because we can't play drums there, so we rented Nando's basement [Nando Speranza, Moncton area producer] and set up all of our stuff in there. So we used his rooms.

JH: Sort of a Neil Young approach to recording: live off the floor.

Rick: Yeah, I guess. And then we got a guy named Bob Weston to come up and push 'record' for us, so we could all play.

JH: So he was basically the engineer then?

Rick: Yeah.

JH: But you handled the producing?

Rick: Yeah, we did the mixing. It was fun 'cause it was a lot easier. We didn't have to worry about getting the right levels. He put it all on tape.

JH: Not as much stress, I suppose.

Rick: Yeah. [laughter]

JH: With this album, are you trying to reach a bigger audience?

Rick: It's just the next thing, I guess. The next part of the story.

JH: Does this album sound different from what you've done before?

Rick: It sounds a little different. There's an eight minute song that's kind of like the other records; it's more dreamy, and then the rest of the record's pretty live-sounding. We wanted to get a bigger low-end sound—more like our live show, because *Forever Again* [their last album] was constructed more in pieces, so we wanted to do the opposite for this record.

Something new to try. [laughter]

JH: What about touring?

Rick: We just go out for short stints here and there and that keeps us more sane.

We don't like being away from home very much, so we go out from two and a half to three weeks at a time. Our longest tour was a month and it was pretty hard.

This is our last show of this tour and we're going to stay home for awhile.

JH: A few weeks, or...?

Rick: Not quite awhile. 'Til maybe the spring; if we do decide to go out in the spring. We'll probably just go down to the States. Like, the Northeastern states: New York and Boston. We do O.K. down there.

We'll probably play Ann Arbor [Michigan] and Chicago. We do O.K. there because we've been there three or four times. The third or fourth time you're there you get a crowd.

JH: The do-it-yourself approach to recording seems to have worked pretty well for you.

Rick: It's the best way. I think the best way to transmit what you're trying to get across is just to do it yourself. Learn as you go.

JH: Are you writing all the songs or are other members of the band writing as well?

Rick: Chris [Thompson, guitarist] has written four on the new record out of sixteen songs. Two are Julie's [Doiron, bass player].

JH: When you're recording an album yourself, for example, do you consider yourself a perfectionist?

Rick: I never try to get a sound, I just let them come to me. I just try to go by instinct and not pick it apart. Like, that was a cool sound for that song, it's over now and I'm not going to worry about it.

I try to be content with what I've done in the past. I really appreciate the little mistakes that work. I've always appreciated little extra stuff that just happens by a fluke.

JH: The happy accidents?

Rick: Yeah.

JH: What are your influences?

Rick: Right now it's a lot of the sixties bands. Like Love, the MC5, the Stooges, CCR, the first few Neil Young records. Have you ever heard Love?

JH: I've heard of them because Jim Morrison of the Doors mentioned them as one of his favourites, but I've never really had the chance to listen to them. Are they really good?

Rick: Yeah, they're my favourite band. Get their second record first. It's called *Forever Changes*. It's amazing.

JH: Is your last album 'Forever Again', sort of a tribute to them?

Rick: Kind of to them. There's a little clip of a 'Love' song on *The Gordon Street Haunting* right at the first of the record.

JH: Do you find you're influenced by more traditional songwriters, like John Lennon or Bob Dylan, for example?

Rick: I like the Beatles a lot. I'm sad that I missed all the specials though.

JH: Where do you get inspiration for your lyrics?

Rick: Usually, it just has to be stuff that just comes. The best songs are usually the one I end up writing all at once. If I can write a bunch of words, the music kind of just comes to it after. Those are songs I know are better because they just came to me.

JH: Are they usually based on personal experiences?

Usually, they're more dreamy and they make more sense to you after awhile.

Sometimes it takes you a little while to get your own lyrics.

JH: How did Eric's Trip come into being?

Rick: Julie and I started playing acoustic and doing *Comes a Time* songs.

JH: You mean the Neil Young album?

Rick: We used to play the whole record together. Julie's the first person I ever learned to sing with. We both started learning to sing together. We learned how to harmonize by listening to Neil Young and Nicolette Larson. The record is so simple you can play and sing at the same time. It's all G and C chords. We got Chris Thompson [guitarist] to play bass, but we couldn't find a drummer. So we would just jam My Bloody Valentine songs and Neil Young songs...with lots of distortion. We were trying to be like My Bloody Valentine, who were also our heroes at the time. Our first few tapes sound sort of like a country version of My Bloody Valentine.

JH: What's it like being on the SubPop label?

Rick: SubPop keeps us because they see something different in us. We hardly take any money from them, so they don't expect us to sell too much or four too much! They just keep putting out our records for us, which is... well, it's a great label to be on 'cause there's no pressure.

JH: Tell about the 'Another Roadside Attraction' tour with the Tragically Hip.

Rick: The tour was pretty nuts. We made a lot of money on each show, but we spent a lot of money on transportation, which we had to have if we wanted to keep up with everybody. They were driving all

night, like twelve to fifteen hours, and we couldn't have kept up in our van, so we decided since we were making so much, let's just put it right back into a bus and live in style for a month.

JH: They invited you on the tour?

Rick: Yeah. They let us practice in their practice room. Gord [Downey, singer of Tragically Hip] really likes us. He has our records. He gets his favourite bands...I guess at the moment we happened to...our record's been on his turntable or something. They're just trying to help out a lot of younger bands who need it. But, it was weird playing on a big stage. When you're crammed into a little club your sound is so big, but on the bigger stage, with different monitors everyday, you have to trust them. It's pretty much a drag. It was a drag but I'm not complaining. [laughter]

JH: Yeah. It was probably a great experience. Are you planning on releasing any of Elevator to Hell... [Rick and Mark from Eric's trip and Ron and Tara from Orange Glass]

Rick: The CD's coming out in the summer. I think there's going to be another EP on there with it. They want me to do another vinyl record and have them both come out on CD. I think I'm going to be doing more Elevator to Hell stuff. We might try to tour a bit.

JH: So you see potential in Elevator to Hell?

Rick: Yeah, it's kind of a natural thing. Julie toured with Broken Girl too, but I think we'll do an Eric's Trip tour in the spring...just keep everything going.

JH: Well, good luck and thanks for the interview.

Rick: You're welcome.