

Big Sugar competes with Belvedere for top billing

BY KAREN PARKER

Concert-goers at the McInnes Room this weekend found themselves bombarded by propaganda from "Belvedere Rocks".

Belvedere, a subsidiary of tobacco company Rothman's-Benson and Hedges, was the major sponsor for Big Sugar's most recent Canadian campus tour, which wound up in Halifax on Saturday night.

Student councils across Atlantic Canada came under fire a couple years ago for allowing similar sponsorships. When Spirit of the West toured the region under the sponsorship of Belvedere in 1996, anti-smoking activists saw it as a deliberate attempt to promote smoking in the youth market.

Spirit of the West saw it differently.

"It was quite expensive [touring Atlantic Canada]," said Linda McRae, the band's accordion player. "We would not have been able to if it had not been for

[Belvedere]. It is one of those things that is a necessity sometimes."

Before even entering the Student Union Building (SUB), students were stopped outside the main doors to answer marketing surveys. Questions included general background information such as age and occupation, but the surveyers also wanted to know how we had found out about the concert, and who we thought the major sponsors were. When asked who was responsible for the survey, the marketing people outside couldn't tell us. According to SUB promotions staff, though, the survey was put on by a marketing company hired by Belvedere Rocks.

Inside the SUB, the walls were plastered with Belvedere banners and posters. Upon presenting our tickets, each of us was given a numbered raffle ticket which was entered in a draw for a leather jacket which had "Belvedere Rocks" emblazoned across the back.

Even inside the McInnes room itself, the blatant tobacco

advertising was evident. Back-lit "Belvedere Rocks" signs hung from the ceiling on either side of the stage. Cigarettes were being sold at the bar that had been set up at the back of the room. And while one side of the stage backdrop featured the characteristic Big Sugar steering wheel, the other side was covered by a majestic lion which looked suspiciously like something you might find on a cigarette package.

The concert was well-attended, and the first band, Pluto, started early. Much of the crowd was still filing in while they played their set. The second opener,

The Matthew Good Band, seemed to be more popular with the crowd and played a fairly long set, but neither of the opening bands really managed to capture the crowd's full attention.

Headliners Big Sugar played an incredible set — so incredible that it almost made me forget the fact that the whole event was a big corporate marketing tool. I was quite impressed when frontman Gordie Johnson stopped the show to admonish the body-surfers in the crowd, basically telling them to stop it or else they'd be removed. But I also lost a lot of respect for the band,

selling out to a tobacco company. Although, one must wonder, if you were a struggling Canadian band and a big corporation offered to pay for your cross-country tour, would you turn it down?

Upon leaving the building, we were once again stopped and asked to answer even more marketing questions. This time it was evident that Belvedere had set up the survey. Among other things, we were asked if we smoked, and, if so, to name our favourite brands. There was no question that Belvedere had spent a lot of money on the concert.

McCulloch's *Dog Park* a big disappointment

BY KARAN SHETTY

Bruce McCulloch's new film *Dog Park* is nothing less than a colossal disappointment. Written and directed by a man whose reputation as a comic talent precedes him, the movie is a lame attempt at a *Four Weddings and a Funeral*-type romantic comedy.

McCulloch's stint as a "kid in the hall", his cameos on *Saturday Night Live* and his humorous appearance in a hit music video have established him as one of the new generation of Canadian comedians ready to assault and infiltrate Hollywood the way Dan Ackroyd, John Candy, Catherine O'Hara and others did so many years ago. But if McCulloch has any real designs on Hollywood stardom he can't keep making poor films like this one. With a big name cast (for a Canadian production)

and McCulloch at the helm, the film held promise for many I'm sure.

Dog Park tries to be a commentary on modern romantic relationships but falls short of saying anything poignant or even

known. This story and the other subplots (which also focus on twenty-something relationships) play out in the local dog park where these people converge each weekend to walk their pets.

I went into the film expecting some of McCulloch's trademark off-beat humour but was treated to a pretty conventional love story. Don't get me wrong, even if I had gone in without any expectations whatsoever, I still would have left with a negative impression of the film. A good film will linger in



Boy meets girl, Wilson and Henstridge in *Dog Park*.

your thoughts, even after you've left the theatre. I didn't give this film a second of thought from the moment the credits started rolling.

It wasn't the acting or directing which did the film in, but the writing — which was bland and unimaginative. Watching these people thrash out their relationships wasn't the least bit entertaining.

funny for that matter. The story centres around a young magazine writer (Luke Wilson) who is trying to pick up the pieces of his life after being dumped by his girlfriend. In the process he meets the girl (Natasha Henstridge) whom he thinks is "the one". Unfortunately she doesn't want much to do with him and makes her intentions

Getting high in Montreal

BY JEN CLEARY AND KATHERINE HEBB

I find myself once again on the floor in the public urinal; broke and deprived of the heroin I need to get me through this day. I take

out my empty syringe and start stabbing it into my pale chest, draining my blood, desperately seeking a high. Each time I do this I spray the walls with my own blood until I become faint and fall unconscious. I dream of waking

up in a hospital surrounded by doctors who inject me with morphine ... I am laughing again.

I wake up a few hours later clutching a toilet bowl unaware of my surroundings. The walls are painted red with my blood and my head is pounding. I start to cry. For the first time in my life reality is staring me blank in the face and I admit to myself that I need help...

The documentary *Confessions of a Rabid Dog*, written and directed by John L'Ecuyer, captures the real life situations of the Montreal heroin scene.

The film is based on the lives of six recovering heroin addicts between the ages of 20 and 40, and the documented experiences of the participants offers a heartfelt and informative approach to drug addiction.

L'Ecuyer himself spent seven years of his life abusing heroin and selling his body on the streets of Montreal. He combines his personal experiences with those of the participants being interviewed as the film takes us through the tragic realities of lives plagued with hopelessness and despair.

Separating each interview are black and white segments poetically narrated by L'Ecuyer describing the vile pattern of heroin addiction. The explicit and graphic

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