

Canadian Music Week

The ABCs of CMW START
 A lot for Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver to handle, but the festival is a great way to celebrate the music scene.

Thursday, Horseshoe Tavern, 8:37 PM

The Lovely Feathers

Last Thursday at the Horseshoe Tavern was the first night of the three day CHARtattack showcase featuring some of the best indie talent in Canada. Kicking off the showcase was the Montreal-based quintet, The Lovely Feathers. While at times off key and struggling to keep up with the complex harmonies, the band did manage to kick out a few a strong jams, complemented by some excellent synth work. "In The Valley," one of their more popular numbers, breathed new life into the growing crowd using an assortment of tricks: strong vocal hooks, quick jittery guitar, and throwback Casio keyboard lines. This is a band to



The Lovely Feathers

Box Party + 10 years + David Cross' nose = The Dears

Can Murray: Kid likes the absolute effect more than I. Pen likes sly hats, and the who-tune effect.

D4b Trio: The name of their band is about as imaginative as the premise of this article.

Boonhoine Crush: Big shiny tubes four called it was awkward.

Fake Shark Real Zombiet: Fake IDs, real 17-year-old fans.

Q-991 Bopolo: A Scot, a Russian and a Greek, well, into a bar. Then a Ukrainian, an Estonian, another Russian, an Ethiopian and two Americans.

Battle of the Asshats

Gene Simmons is a genius. There is no other explanation. In what seemed an odd choice for him, Simmons made an appearance at this year's Canadian Music Week as the event's keynote speaker. In his conference address on Thursday, Gene went through all the points expected in a Gene Simmons sermon: Toronto is the best, I am powerful and attractive, Simmons Records, I slept with your mom, I am going to turn a Canadian band into stars, 4,000 women. Needless to say, most of the audience was amused by the delegation's choice of such a flamboyant speaker, but more so because Gene Simmons took the opportunity to deliver a barrage of advertisements in front of international media and the heads of every major music market in the game. Case in point: Bob Lefsetz's dismissal of the entire event, posted on his online circulating letter to all the big names in the biz. "He's not a dumb dude. But it's a full time commercial. And why? Doesn't he have enough money? Hey Gene, you were a star once, can you let it go?" Apparently not. In a response to Lefsetz via email, Simmons broke down Lefsetz's blog entry line-by-line, inserting his own comments which, apart from putting Lefsetz on the defensive, were quite entertaining. Sensing an opportunity, Neill Dixon, head honcho of CMW, managed to strike up a public debate between the two foes, which took place Friday, March 13 in the Grand Ballroom of the Royal York Hotel. At the debate, after calmly asking Lefsetz for his name (callous), Simmons went on to argue that advertising his new record label was exactly the reason he was there. Makes sense, but why should a young band sign with Gene Simmons, countered Lefsetz. This argument made up the rest of the debate, along with a few comments about Lefsetz's mother and his "little" experience in the music business. Instead of submitting to Simmons' attacks, Lefsetz countered by calling Gene out on his abysmal solo recording career. To which Simmons explained that at the time, his label was folding and he needed someone to watch over him - showing the only hint of weakness throughout the half-hour discussion. At the end of the show, Lefsetz was the clear winner of the debate, calling Simmons out on every facet of the proposed 360 deal he was purported to have offered Down With Webster, a local band which mixes skater-rock and hip-hop. But at the end of the day, it was clear that Simmons came out on top. Though Lefsetz argued that "not all media is good media," it was difficult to argue against the fact that Gene Simmons, by simply coming to this conference, created enormous media attention for the band he was dealing with. His quips may have been uncalled for, but Simmons did not play dumb to any of Lefsetz's questions, and in doing so, did his job successfully. Don't hate the player, hate the game. For the full audio of Friday's debate and the text of the Simmons/Lefsetz battle, check out this article and many others from CMW at www.mediumonline.ca

Thursday, Main Ballroom, Royal York Hotel

Huckle Berry Friends: Three Girls, two mikes, one song (as far as I could tell), no choruses.

Jully Black: Fun fact about Jully Black: She has not aged since 1998 by living only in short increments during the hooks of other Canadian R&B performer's songs. Saturday

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Malajube

CTV can kiss my ass. The low key lead singer/songwriter of Montreal's Malajube, Julien Minaue, preferred an interview with Olympia Blue, my minitape, to the strategic lighting, comfy couch, and cheese host of a televised interview. Wednesday afternoon, up on the second floor of the El Mo - a disastrous array of scuff marks, cigarette butts, and the dank smell of flowering beer - Julien joined me on a black leather couch remedied by duct-tape to discuss the group's third album, Labyrinthe (the follow-up to 2006's breakout Trompe-L'OEil). The band - composed of three other members, Julien's brother Francis, Mathieu Cournoyer and Thomas Augustin - knows what it wants with a good head on the industry. Indie-heads were delighted when they decided to withdraw from any major label deals and stay with the indie and Montreal-based label Dare to Care Records: "We had a really good experience there, and a lot of creative freedom," remarks Julien on their fidelity. Who needs to be singed these days anyway? Malajube composes lyrics only in French, yet they have managed to become successful in the US, the UK, and Japan. The media loves to talk about this. In fact, the English vs. French thing - "will you ever write in English?" - is all they ever get to talk about in interviews. I tried the honest approach. I went Meta, and asked the quiet Julien with his fur-rimmed hood covering most of his face, "Do you ever wish 2006 never happened?" He smiled and agreed, answering "French is just what we feel most confident singing in. It is what it is, we just try to stay true to what we are as a band. I suppose good things happen because of this." With a band so engrossed in the topic of languages, it's pretty brilliant to know that their moniker as a single word, Malajube, means nothing.

Friday, El Mocambo, 12:15 AM



Crystal Castles

Slim Twig: If Jack White, pompadour haircut and Dose One of Subtle had a baby.

Rich Aucoin: This guy is going to be big. I see Rowboats big!

Q: No such group

Punish Yourself: You remember all the black light paint covered bad guys in Joel Schumacher's Batman movies? They started a band.

Octoberman: Even sort of sounds like The Decemesters.

Maybe Smith: This guy has got the right idea. I'll think of a one liner... Every guy who has Rivers Cuomo glasses has had, or currently has, an Asian girlfriend. I hope that's as funny as I think it is.

Les Breastfeeders: From Montreal. Their name is actually French for "near the water" I believe.

Kenny Mahler: Vaguely Christian country that's exactly what this is. If you don't believe me: <http://www.myspace.com/KennyMahler>



Lefsetz vs Simmons

Saturday

X No such group

Yay: Fun fact about Europe: It's even cooler than being from Montreal.

Z She's adorable. I'm out of one-liners.

Friday, Hard Rock Live, 11:06 PM.

The Honeys

Dublin has U2. New York has The Strokes. Montreal has the Arcade Fire. Shanghai has...The Honeys.

Most of you are probably not familiar with The Honeys (Tianmi de Haizi in Mandarin), the Chinese alternative-rock scene for that matter, but they are hoping to change all that at this year's Canadian Music Week.

This year's festival in Toronto will feature 28 Chinese artists and provide the Canadian market with the opportunity to sample some of China's most ground-breaking artists. It was a concerted effort between the festival's organizers and the Chinese Consul for Cultural Affairs to showcase some of the nation's more popular acts. Of all the Chinese artists taking the stage at this year's festival, The Honeys have garnered the most buzz and, after watching their set, it is easy to see why.

The four-piece band, who met at art-school in Hangzhou, have gone through some lineup changes, but are now a powerful quartet that possess the rare quality of being marketable across cultures.

The band features lead singer Yu Tian, drummer Zhenhao, bassist Zheng Yu, and Wu Qingyong who all bring their own individual personality to their performance. Despite the language barrier - the band sings mostly in Mandarin - The Honeys' music is universally acceptable in terms of melody and raw emotion. It's not a "world music" sort of thing, but simply power-pop-rock through and through.

Their set at the Hard Rock featured a bevy of precision drumming and guitars buried in spaced-out delay, without overshadowing the band's vocal harmonies. Songs like "Zai Jie Shang" and "Li Kai" showcased the band's innovative style that melds both eastern and western flavours. This synthesis was most obvious on "Yi Jiang Nan", where the band utilizes the sounds of what appeared to be a yangqin, the national instrument of China.

A Chinese "invasion" may not be immediately upon us, but The Honeys are certainly leading the way. The band is racking up financial support from wealthy corporate sponsors (Sennheiser electronics and Fender guitars), and earning global acclaim from music critics all over the world. The band has established itself in China, and is making definite waves across Europe, mainly in the U.K. and Germany, but their sights are now set on the Americas.

It's difficult for international artists to crack the illustrious North American Market, especially coming from Asia, but if there is any band that can do it, it's The Honeys.

The Indies

Volcanoes in Canada: Not the Jonas Brothers.

Winter Gloves: Fun fact about Montreal: If your band is from Montreal, people from Toronto will immediately assume you're cool.

Indie Awards Showcase

In celebration of Canadian Music Week, the ninth annual Independent Music Awards took place at the Fairmont Royal York on Saturday night inside the majestic Canadian Room. The awards were hosted by Jon Lajoie, a Montreal-born comedian and actor whose popular YouTube parodies of everyday situations have resulted in an online cult-like following.

Winner of the Astral Media Radio Favourite Single and Favourite New Artist, Lights was extremely thankful and greatly acknowledged the importance of Canadian music. A Timmins native, she celebrated and emphasized the success of local bands as many of the performers and her fellow nominees began their careers in the Greater Toronto Area.

Attention shifting to the main stage, Favourite Pop Group The Midway State kicked off their set with the harmonious single "Never Again" followed by Bif Naked's tribute to Canadian rock legends Anvil, a heavy metal trio that emerged in Toronto during the late 70s.

Still going strong with an anticipated 2010 release, Anvil became the newest inductees into the Indie Hall of Fame, with 16 albums to their name since forming in 1978. For old times sake, they played their 1982 title track "Metal on Metal", fully equipped with Steve "Lips" Kudlow's crazed facial contortions.

A few more awards were handed out including Favourite Group/Duo to Ubiquitous Synergy Seeker (USS) and Favourite Electronic Artist/Group or Duo to Crystal Castles, the evening's two headliners.

Next up were the Arkells, whose infectious energy and charm really revved up the spirit of the event. Max Kerman divided the audience during their hit single "Oh, the Boss is Coming!" who then took turns chanting "punching in/punching out" with the singer.

Although a difficult set to follow, the next performers brought their own fresh style. Straight out of Montreal, the duo known as Beast gave fair warning that they were not to be messed with and delivered sensational performances one after another, as Betty Bonifassi's swagger showed no signs of faltering. An extremely persistent fan pleaded with Bonifassi to touch her hand, claiming that she was her "biggest fan in the world", to which Beast's front woman bemusedly complied.

Described by the band as having a style known as trip rock, the rough guitar riffs combined with Jean-Phi Conclaves' booming drums made crowd favourites "Mr Hurricane" and "Out of Control" easy to dance along to.

However, the most interesting and bizarre act of the night was by far USS, who shifted gears with a performance that incorporated fruit-smoothies and cardboard cut-outs. The duo delivered a whopping 10-song set, receiving more than double the exposure of many of the opening bands, and entertaining the audience well past midnight.

They started off with a bang in their matching tracksuits, as turntablist Jason Parsons brought the art to a whole new level, spinning and scratching while balancing on his head. Lead vocalist Ash Buchholz attempted the craft himself during "Stationary Robbery", but then things started to verge on ridiculous when Parsons began running from one end of the room to the other, jumping and cartwheeling around obstacles, and tying yellow caution tape along the length of the stage.

During their last performance they indulged in strawberry-banana drinks with the help of a blender, but despite USS' crazy antics, the superb quality of hits like "Hollowpoint Sniper Hyperbole" and "2 and 15/16ths" could not be disputed.

Greatly behind schedule, the last and perhaps most anticipated act of the night, Crystal Castles, ultimately disappointed their fans. Starting off shakily with a microphone that didn't seem to be plugged in, Alice Glass sung her hardest and used the stage to her advantage, but when the band exited after only a few songs, fans were angered and even began booing Toronto's electronic duo.

Despite a few lulls throughout the night, the main highlight was the generally positive response from all in attendance towards most of the bands. Never is a feeling so great than to witness the support for something outside of the mainstream, and The Indies were out to prove just that.

Saturday, Royal York Hotel, 8:30 PM

Saturday, El Mocambo, 9:01 PM.

The Miles

Toronto indie rock trio fills out a questionnaire for The Medium prior to their Saturday night showcase.

- 1. Do you get called cute a lot by the music press?**
 We were once called "cute as hell" by the Toronto Star, and readers were advised to lock up their daughters. That didn't stop us.
- 2. Do the phrases, "formative years" and "with a bright future" bother you?**
 When people say we're in our formative years and have a bright future we take it as a compliment! We think we have a lot of places to go with our music, so it doesn't bother us at all.
- 3. How long was your self-titled EP in the making?**
 We wrote all the songs on our first EP basically in our first six months of being in a band. We recorded the EP in two days all night in Steve's basement. Some of the songs that appeared on it resurface again on Blood On My Blazer (only re-incarnated with enhanced kick ass-ness).
- 4. A lot of the songs are inspired by women (or women of want). Are women generally muses in your songwriting?**
 We all really like girls a lot. They're very exciting.
- 5. Does Blood on My Blazer have an overall message and/or feel you were going for?**
 I don't know if it has a "message" exactly, we all just knew we wanted to make some catchy, crazy dance music and try and capture the party atmosphere we love so much. The main thing we tried to put into it was the raw energy of the songs, that's why we did almost everything, just the three of us, "live", together in a room.
- 6. Are you guys finished highschool? (If not, I hope you guys are wearing sunglasses indoors, in the halls, in gym class, in science... like always.)**
 Yes, we're finished high school, just. We always tried to wear sunglasses, but only a little as each of us is visually impaired to some degree.
- 7. How did you all meet and subsequently pick up instruments? Bowling team? Busing in Toronto? Your dad plays the jazz flute?**
 We've known each other since high school. A few of the songs on Blood on My Blazer were written out of tune pianos in the practice rooms, and many lyrics were penned discreetly in English class when we were supposed to be writing Shakespearean sonnets. Go figure.

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