

Acorn Ranger: The Band That Loved Their Stove

by Brad DEIGHAN

Right foot crunches snow again, left foot slides in slush ... again. Right foot crunches snow, left foot slides in slush. Right foot stops. Left foot catches up, stops. "Can I see some ID please?" "Sure." "Thank you." "And you ... thanks" Left foot touches floor, right foot copies. I can hear music, and it sounds pretty damn good. Inside, and immediately: "They're playing!"

"What?... who?"

"Gerard and Blake and Tim!"

This is great! A fellow shows up at Brennan's for a Port Citizen New Year's, and as if that's not good enough, this fellow discovers that some buddies of his who rock in a progressive funk band are opening up the show and they're not doing too bad a job.

A friend yells into my ear, "This is awesome good shit, I really like it, who is it?"

"Did you see who it is?" I ask.

He looks. Surprise and *Oh my Gods* follow. And so, for the rest of the night I wonder how, after playing at Melons a few times, these guys who call themselves Acorn Ranger have stolen the opening spotlight at Brennan's on New Year's.

Tim Kelly answers my question. It turns out that Tim was having a pretty good time at Melons, having a few while listening to Port Citizen. After the show, Tim went up to congratulate the band on a good show and

Pete asked him what they would think of playing with them on New Year's at Brennan's. It sounded good to Acorn Ranger and so it happened.

"New Year's wasn't our best show," explains Tim.

"Yeah, probably our worst," echos Gerard MacInnis, smile creeping on to his face; "but we had fun!" They didn't have a singer and still don't, because their whole set - surprisingly - is improvised.

"I think that's the really entertaining part of it, what we're doing is never the same," Gerard explains.

"Can I put an ad in here?" he asks.

"Wanted: one freestyler who can improvise with a funk band."

These boys started playing a long time ago. Gerard played in El Turismo with friends Josh MacIssac and Brian Fitzpatrick, along with Acorn Ranger's current drummer, Blake Gagnon. Along with playing in El Turismo, Gerard played guitar with Tim in I Absolute, and after that they went off into the mountains "with a vision of creating funk."

Acorn Ranger have been playing together for two years now ("We still don't have any material!"). Their name was chosen in honour of

Blake's wood-stove, which was, apparently, an Acorn Ranger brand wood-stove. Not only was this wood-stove an Acorn Ranger brand, but it was *the* stove, the one that kept them warm in the winter, and sucked in the cigarette smoke in the summer.

After some electrical cow-prodding about past shows, Tim tells us about Melons with Split Lip: "Those were some of my favourite shows we ever did; I wish we had them on tape so we could make some sets out of them." This is the part where nostalgia kicks in, and Tim and Gerard start talking about past parties at Plastic Weld, a joint which another friend's (Wade Smith) father owned, and with which I was all too familiar. Sleeping on the floor, sleeping on office dividers, tables. Collapsing anywhere. There was even one incident in which Thomas Lloyd - Cadre volunteer - awoke very dry and thirsty one winter morning, underneath a Plastic Weld heater.

As to the when and where of their next show, they're not entirely sure but explain that they'd "play on the side-walk in the wintertime" and would love to get inside the UPEI barn. Sometime soon we hope. With lots of hard earned talent and an improvised set, these progressive funksters are sure to put the bounce back into your not-as-bouncy-as-it-would-be-if-you-were-listening-to-Acorn-Ranger life.

