

Mad about Halifax On Music III (in a good way)

By KAREN RAWLINES

The third installment of the venerable Halifax On Music festival, presented by Proper Productions, survived a handful of big name fallouts in fine style by thriving on the spirit that underscores one of the strongest independent music scenes on the map.

Three headlining acts booked to the three day festival, which ran from September, balked at their show cases. Will Oldham (Palace Music, etc.) was a -no-show. Mary Lou Lord cancelled. The Brian Jonestown Massacre was absent.

Despite the odds against them, Halifax On Music prefers the glass half full, and opted to amplify what was left of their still savourable roster. Organizers and the bevy of bands on site rallied to overcome the streak of bad luck.

The high profile absenteeism was perhaps the best thing that could happen to many bands, as the onus was put on show goers to look beyond the names, stylish habits and reputations of famed ones, and to appreciate the strengths of the next wave of popular.

The pace of a festival of this calibre does not allow even the most skilled of club-hoppers to soak in all of the sonic condensed into one weekend. Still, stand-outs got their just desserts with appreciation untainted by brooding ticket

holders who still mourned the artists that were playing hooky.

Especially Impressive status goes uncontestedly to The Mooney Suzuki of big, bad New York City. Maximum rock posturing, clean and o-so-very-loud sound made this white-turtle-necked/black-jeaned four piece a most memorable act. They played a table-crushing set with bad PA at the Bike Shop; an ironically hard, after hours set at the divine Dio Mio Gelato; then ended the weekend by louding their way into the hearts of festival organizers to win a replacement top-billing at the "Grand Finale" [a typo that makes sense]. They played their mad ("in a good way") hearts out every show, and took Brian Jonestown Massacre's place free of charge.

Second shiniest show honours go to Cinnamon Toast records and their fifth annual Cinnamon Toast Brunch at Rye's Deli and Pub. The ever inimitable Piggy offered their ebullient Maritime calypso to the throngs of dancing admirers who were not immune to their striking choreography. The Brunch event continues to be a festival favourite. Festival publicist, Melissa Buote, captures the essence of this pure moment:

"Dancing...eating...wicked." Other notable notables

were featured in CBC's Brave New Waves sponsored show case, including Halifax's art-drenched Soaking Up Jagged, surprise impressionados, Do Make Say Think, and the hauntingly atmospheric, Godspeed You Black Emperor.

The above bands added to one of the most conspicuous aspects of HoM III: the very visibly evolved independent scene, which has branched considerably from the days of yore.

"It's moved away from pop," Buote explained. "There's a branching-off... there are more experimental and art rock bands. A greater diversity."

The diversity was obvious, with bands ranging from Teen Wolf's rock to Five Foot Nine's folk, and from Joel Plaskett's country-inspired narratives to the realm of Halifax hip hop or North of America's atonal melodies, and beyond.

As the sound of the indie scene changes, so does the sound featured in the festival. This was evident particularly in the representation of the Halifax bands.

"This is the first year the festival hasn't had the commercially popular and nationally affluent bands like Sloan, the Super Friendz, and the Inbreds," Buote said, noting that the latter two have broken

up.

"Pop hasn't disappeared, however," Buote is quick to add. "It's just left the forefront."

Other Things I saw and Liked at The On

Ciao Bella	Dio Mio Gelatto
B'Ehl	
Wheat	
4 Star Movie	Halifax
Joel Plaskett	
Thrush Hermit	
Piggy's shirts	
Marc Bell's comics	

September 25-27, 1998
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