

SAPPY TIMES

DOUBLING AS A FAN SINCE 2009.

Sunday

(looking back on Saturday)

August 5, 2012

A GIGANTIC DIAMOND ROTATES at the front of the Vogue Theatre. The diamond is called Celeste. I forgot to mention: in addition to rotating, the enormous silver gemstone is singing. It is singing very sweetly. And in a few minutes the diamond will explode. After Celeste explodes the *APPLAUSE* sign will turn on and the capacity crowd will scream its diamondy exploded hearts out. Then the cougar will fight the sasquatch. This is night two of SappyFest 7 and I swear it will live in infamy.

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Jeff tells me that I missed the best show of the festival. It was Yellow Teeth, on Friday night. He loved them so much that he fell in love with them. "Like Beatlemania," he says. I wish I had seen Yellow Teeth. But it is impossible to see everything at SappyFest and at every given moment someone is falling in love with someone else, inaugurating their own Beatlemania. A thousand Beatlemanias. SappyFest is Beatlemaniamania.

For example: In the MTA Chapel there is a man with grey hair to his shoulders, a flat battered cap, a guitar. His name is Michael Hurley and he is a little like an old rooster, cock-a-doodling, under a drafty coxcomb. He sings about taters, about a "sacramental rattlesnake". It's very quiet in here and honestly a little hard to hear, and the quiet undermines the songs' reaching, their straining. It muffles Hurley's humour. It is hard

to guffaw in fading church light and so our guffaws go unconsummated, winging away like mynabirds.

Until the mouth trumpet. The mouth trumpet is sweet as ambrosia. It is a cartoon requiem. Mynabirds <3 out the wazoo.

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Advisories:

- the Strut Putts mini-golf course is difficult but vaguely, very vaguely, fulfilling;
- the ice-cream shed beside the supermarket is cheap as holy-moly and owned by a 13-year-old girl;
- Oneida consist of 1 serious head bobber, 3 mild head bobbbers, and 1 man who doesn't ever bob his head (?!).

Marine Dreams are boyish, except for the girl. Tattoos cannot conceal this boyishness; it is blue and loud and clear, in the skipping riffs, the chiming clean guitars, in the lifting chorus lines. I am sure that Marine Dreams have already nursed a broken heart or two, but they do not seem like they have been ruined yet, not even once. They haven't had to pick up the pieces, to choose between vinegar and cold water, between cheap hatred and brave persistence. Or maybe they have, and they are good pretenders.

Whereas Tomboyfriend are terrible actors. This is not a criticism. Here is a glitzy glam musical and a man in skimpy undershorts, and he looks exactly like a man in skimpy

FREE!

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undershorts, in a glitzy glam musical. Their performance is full of theatre but empty of deception: deliberate, unsentimental, the irony like cellophane. And "The End of Poverty", Tomboyfriend's best song, sounds exquisite. Everything is more complicated with the Blow: I cannot quite decide about Khaela Maricich's halfheartedness, her mistakes. Is she set loose by her formal conceits, or restrained by them? She tosses her hair, plays air guitar. No, not air guitar - some kind of lightsaber electro-tube. I wish she had an actual lightsaber electro-tube. I wish she killed someone with it, for real.

Later, I propose to myself that Oneida sound like Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, if Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band were run through an agricultural thresher.

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It is so hot in the Presbyterian Church, hot for everyone except contented Stained Glass Jesus Christ, who is clutching a lamb. Christine Fellows is at the piano and her friends hold cellos, but the stuff that matters most is in their voices: bright right harmonies that fall across each other in strong straight lines. A song of dragonflies, a song of poker-backed old ladies, a song of sled-dogs, written at -47°C . Then a song of hospital and tigerlilies, a song called "Vertebrae", a song I already love so much. My heart breaks when she sings that word, "tigerlilies". I am grateful for the breaking. Let everyone in this whole damn festival hear a song they know & love, because it makes you feel fragile and omnipotent and alive.

Fucked Up are like an incendiary bomb and yet they are also fun, and healthy, and the night is liberated by their din. Such noisy joy. Damian Abraham bites into a plastic beach ball and then wears the beach ball like a festive paisley shirt, for festive paisley crowdsurfing, which makes it seem twee but in fact Abraham is ferocious, voracious, hungry for birthday candles & men's tears & scars from headbanging. I feel victorious when I listen to this band. I feel like I have ended the war.

Earlier, Baby Eagle shot roman candles of noisy rock, pinwheeling. I listened while an ice-cream cone dripped down my hand, sticky slurry, and never noticed. So easy, to be happy.

Store is located on Bridge Street, a few doors down from Mel's. Store is like a store without a last name. "Just call me Store." It is casual. It is professional. We get a tour from Store's first employee, Julien. He shows us the peep-show for machines, hidden in tires. He shows us the wishing well. He shows us the prices. "We also have Body Broth," Julien says. Body Broth costs

480 cents. It is soup stock made with potatoes, onions, carrots and the bathing liquid of Julien's boss, Christine Swintak.

The drummer of Eternal Summers is working so hard in the sweltering heat. We watch him from the Cranewood lawn and we are inherently smug: cool, comfortable, here on the grass. He does not hold it against us. He and this marvellous band play marvellous sludgy pop, one marvellous song after another, and I think to myself that an eternal summer would be just this: wonder after wonder, lapis lazuli punk-rock, lots of sweating. Later, across town, in front of of Alex Durlak's film/sound installation, I am droned and dumbstruck. It is dread I feel: if this installation could roam, if it was not tethered to the Vogue, it would be eating people behind the Scotiabank.

Two of Saturday's bands play Future Music, something just on the edge of what we already know:

- The first is Nap Eyes, with luscious & stained rock'n'roll. I love the crooked whine of these guys, the tumulted groove that's sort of sloppy but also sort of not, sort of determined, like a pilgrim with a shitty map.
- Then there are the Doormen, from John Cougar Band Camp, a quintet with lumbering guitar & piano lines, like drowsy Jandek, and bratty vocals like Tullycraft. They play a spiky tune called "Awesomeness of the Untitled" and it is as awesome as they say: wheezy post-punk organ over a tight rail-tie groove. "Canada Post is the slowest mail," they sing, on another song. "City Mail is as fast as a horse."

The host of the Talking Exploding Diamond Talk Show is Tony Snails, with his poor abused sidekick, Harvey Max. After midnight, they transform the Vogue into a television studio. We are all there with them, falling for Baby Lalonde and cheering on BA Johnston, weeping for Celeste, snickering at six-packs of vacuum-cleaners, mesmerised by glinting twilight Cat Pontoon. Functionaries in chef-hats make popcorn disappear. Calvin Johnston makes us cringe. Wandering home, we practise our Australian accents.

Eight hours earlier, Michael Feuerstack sang a line about "the old hellos of love" and I noticed, for the first time, the big tent's string of xmas lights. He was no longer Snailhouse but he played Snailhouse songs, with a Snailhouse band, and the crowd made Snailhouse moves - men dipped, girls swayed. Then that great band loosed a short squall of feedback, and we all squinted for a sec, like we were seeing something bright, like we were seeing something far away. And then the show went on. 🐉