

SAPPY



TIMES

BEWITCHED BY SPOOKLIGHTS SINCE 2009.

Monday

(looking back on Sunday)

August 2, 2010

And so that's it. That's all. You will wake up this morning and blink your eyes and realize with a start that Sappyfest number five has come to a close, & although the sun may be shining and the birds may be singing, there is a great pallor over everything, a gigantic Sackville-sized shadow. And you will cry. And then you will begin, you sap, to count the days until a certain 2011 weekend when a certain tent will be erected in a certain place in your certain heart.

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Cousins are a singing drummer and a standing guitarist and I suspect they are not cousins. The music is a brambling thrum, barely reined noise, grimy and valiant. They are songs about old-fashioned youthful wants, or about "playing dice in the wintertime, with friends". It is loud, forceful, freelance. It is thrilling and rad.

Michelle McAdorey chooses different sorts of wonders. "*Love will take you into the sunrise,*" she sings. "*It will take you into rain.*" There are dusks and dawns in her voice.

Ryan Driver and Eric Chenaux are watercolours beside her. The soft songs slip, blur, iris.

With BJ Snowden, there is none of this. There is instead clearness, transparency, the simple delight of a song that is what it says it is. "Judge Joe Brown" is about TV's Judge Joe Brown. ("*J for Justice / O for Outta sight / E for Erudite.*") "New Brunswick" is a Charlie Brown dance party about this very province. Snowden wears big glasses, gold sequins, an enormous smile. She jumps up and down, giddy, and her spirit blitzes the whole quiet theatre.

Shapes & Sizes play a fucked up rhythm & blues. The rhythms are wilful, the blues are scarlets. They play slow grooves, jerking pop hooks - tense, erotic, pathological. I imagine a labyrinth, the walls closing in; somewhere here is my lover, and a sinister version of myself.

But today these torrid songs also feel lighter somehow. They are loose, sunlit. Rory Seydel plays a guitar solo and it is like a bird caught, released, caught.

FREE!

(Continued on the other side of this page.)

I do not understand why Gentleman Reg's songs are not fizzing from every radio in the country - flying up out of the wireless and knocking birds out of fruit-trees. It is not just that they are limber, hooky. They whizz. They appear suddenly in your hands.

And the Sadies' songs ought to be made into medals. Make them from nickel, canvas and shoe-leather. We could wear these when we go out, for strength. They play songs so fast that they could rob us blind, steal all my dimes. But despite these tricks, despite their duelling silhouettes in the stage-lights, the Sadies aren't just about accelerating surf guitar solos, cactus-needle precision; remember the other moments, golden and gentle. Hear two brothers singing the same sweet sentiments.

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Sloan clamber up on stage and play *Twice Removed* start to finish and they sing every word, riff every riff, like it's from yesterday, a masterpiece recorded at Sappyfest, only it wasn't, it was recorded 16 years ago, but even the guitar tone sounds the same.

I am in a crowd of people, illuminated only by Christmas lights and the stray spotlights from the stage. Sloan begin to play "Deeper Than Beauty" and I find myself saying, out loud, the words: "oh *sh-t!*". Earlier, Chris sings, "*If you had a funeral / I'd--*" He does not stop there but I am already interrupting him, at the top of my lungs, yelling. I shout, all caps, "*BE THERE WITH BELLS ON,*" and I feel like I am illuminated by a whole lot more than Christmas lights.

It must be strange, to play an old album back; to revisit the songs you wrote when you were young and stupid, and a genius. It must be strange. Up there on stage, Sloan do not seem sure how to feel.


It must also be strange, to stand in a crowd and listen to


the performance of an album you do not know. A woman taps me on the shoulder. She says, "Do you know what band this is?" I do not feel sorry for her but what I want to tell her is to go to the record store and buy *Twice Removed* and take it home, and to be a teenager again, and somehow for 15 years to pass and *then* for her to come stand there beside me, at Sappyfest. And she'd be shouting, all caps.

Because for those like me, Sloan's closing set is a gorgeous, glorious gift. It is a kiss on the lips. *Twice Removed* was one of *those* albums. It is a reason I am here. And even though yes the CD is in my home, waiting, ready, unchanged - on Bridge Street these songs seem rekindled. The chords chime, lyrics leap from deepest memory. For 44:48 minutes, I remember *everything*.

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Did you have a good weekend? Did you make new friends? Did you lose your way and recover it? Did you sit in a church pew, like a well-worn bible, listening to folk-songs? Did you see Diamond Rings twist in the midnight? Did you watch the mist rise around Rick White, or the feedback lift up Baby Eagle, or hear Al Tuck honk like a goose? Do you have new clothes, marked with anchors and elephants and mysterious Mexican wrestlers? Did you reserve a place in your heart for Corey Isenor? Did you learn the formula for Chris Murphy's youth serum? Did you walk home through the marshes, when it was too dark to see? How about Chad Van Gaalen's defecated shapeshifters - did you glimpse them, at the Vogue? Did you swill beers, crack wise, rock out, break it down? Did you furiously spend 100 Dollars? Did you wish certain members of Snailhouse and Shapes & Sizes and Rockets Red Glare a happy birthday? (You have until tonight.) Did you nap? Did you bring your sweet lovin' home to me?

I didn't. It was impossible to do all of these things. But I tried. I enjoyed the trying. With all of you. 

SAPPY  TIMES is written by Sean Michaels, but only because of (and thanks to) Sappyfest #5. This is the last of three issues, written in an unfortunate hurry, distributed around Sackville in honour of the 2010 festival. Sean is a Montreal-based writer. His work most often appears at www.saidthegramophone.com. Please write him letters. With gratitude to Paul Henderson, Jon Claytor and the people of Sackville.