

SAPPY TIMES

SCRAWLING MARSH VOODOO SINCE 2009.

Sunday

(looking back on Saturday)

August 1, 2010

Due to the variety & depth of Saturday's marvels, today's issue of the Times was forced to employ a smaller-than-usual font. We apologize.

Saturday morning comes crawling out into the day very much like "Instrumental #1", by Hours: The Band. Which is to say, gently. It is a day of sunlight and gazebos, cupcakes, corncob, a band that pulls up, jangling, in a trailer.

It begins with CFL Sessions. They are part riddle, part folk concert, part elaborate joke. For "generations", these songs have been passed down from one CFL player to another, or so we're told. Henry Svec says he knelt in the stacks at the National Archives, headphones pressed to his ears, transcribing meditations on tackles and the Toronto Argonauts. Now he & two fellow folklorists reenact them, with a focus on "precision and legibility". This means: earnest songs, warm singing, some ratty trombone solos. Every punchline makes us laugh.

At Uncle Larry's, we behold Etaoin Shrdlu's final show. They tell us so: "This is our final show." Describing their LP, they

say: "Our first and last album". In this way, everything becomes *important*. These songs are not just furious, intricate, exact: they are harbingers. They are knells. Yes: these riffs are doomed. It is seriously righteous stuff, and there is the temptation to dance, because the drummer is like a cave monster and the guitarists are his stalagmites; but the dancing I imagine is more just falling and getting up again, motherfucker.

There is a similar mathematics to the set by the Skeletones 4, cock-sure and a -amamie. Long Long Long show none of this precision. They are busy with boyish hijinks - if by boyish one means noisy and by hijinks one means stealing ladders from under our feet. That kind of thing. They play a jerking crash and chug, verses sweetly clamoured.

A secret to happy Sappyfest: steal winks. (This means: take naps.) It's very difficult to do; there is, after all, non-stop awesome. But if you are planning to stay up until 2am, having the time of yr fucking life, or to stay up until 4am, writing a newspaper, do what you gotta do. I fell asleep to Dog Day. I dreamed of lost loves, old shoes, the fronts of locomotives.

FREE!

(Continued on the other side of this page.)

If you stand along the inner right edge of the mainstage tent, and it is windy, it feels as if ghosts are giving you little shoves.

PS I Love you are two-man extraordinary. They force me to mix metaphors. They are like going swimming and glimpsing a humming car battery at the bottom of the pool. They are sharp, distorted, full of flowers; sudsy, charged and intricate. One drummer, exact in his playing; one singer-guitarist, with enough pedals for a fleet of tandem bicycles. He wails on that guitar, bends it, taps out hard splendours. He sounds as if he is tearing important things in half.

What do you call it when you are crowd-surfing, but standing up? Is it crowd-resting? Crowd-dwelling? Regardless, the man from Apollo Ghosts is doing this. He is singing, loudly, about the "*Things you go through!*" Later, Vish points out that the man is wearing a cape. And I realize abruptly that he was not, after all, crowd-resting; he was flying.

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All weekend, I have been spotting dimes. I do not mean figurative dimes: not Chad Van Gaalen's scuffed sterling songs, a gleam; not the high silver harmonies of Bette & Wallet. I mean on the street, at my apartment, there - on the ground. Dimes! Why am I finding them? What does it mean?

It is early evening in the Legion hall, which is lit in certain parts and dark in other parts; the walls are seaweed-green. The Silt feel incandescent, hypnogogic, vaguely tropical. We are like anemones, tilting toward them. They are a lefthanded cloudland Fleetwood Mac; they are a trio of small lakes. Their soft songs are unravelling.

Ian Roy recalls a lyric: "spider-wings".

When Jim Guthrie gets on stage to make his Sappyfest debut, he is greeted as an old friend. The performance is almost backwards: he has been gone for a while and yet his band, his enormous seven-piece wonder of a band, sound like they have been touring together forever. They sound like they know each-other's everything: like they've gotten into fights, fallen

for the same boys & girls. Jim sings, "Picture me this," and the guitars and horns are flowering. Live drums lift up "Trouble". Everything is wistful but certain. He yells at ghosts to "get back! get back!" and we're all behind him, before him; we'll keep him from harm.

Come Saturday night, everybody has a problem. It is best conveyed by the t-shirt of Horses' lead singer. The t-shirt says: *METZ*. Horses just took the stage at the Legion. At this very instant, Metz took the stage at Uncle Larry's. Down the block, the readings have begun at Little Armadillo. Tonight is so damn wonderful that it's also a tragedy. So each of us win & lose. Please tell me about Metz, and Rockets Red Glare. (The line was too long.) Tell me about Misha and Amanda. (I was late.) I will tell you a little about the rest:

- Horses are young men in beards, yelling things like *WE'RE NOT DEAD YET!* and *HOLD ME NOW!* & these lines are fortifications, rallying cries, messages to self. We've all got beating bloodsoaked hearts.
- Ian Roy tells a story about a bear, a tiny gun, and three men named Napoleon. The story is elegant, vivid, untrue. Portents, it promises, hold significance. (Dimes?!)
- I see Richard Lavolette & the Oil Spills, hollering, the room all one and warm and bittersweet.
- I see Cat Pontoon in green lycra. She is fresh off her Gift of Song tour, rapping, voguing, interviewing herself. It is bewildering and easy. She sings slow songs in a gorgeous nightshade voice. She holds our breath.
- and Snailhouse.

The hour is late. We conceal ourselves among Jon Claytor's paintings. There are tiny moths. They skim over our hands, our faces, our denim legs. It is "unforgiving" light, Snailhouse says, but the moths like it. They do not need forgiving. Snailhouse sits with his sneakers over the side of the plywood. He holds his guitar. He sings.

What he does is he sings so well. In a voice growing hoarse, he sings so well. Of juniper and sycamore; of lost friends; of lovers. We fill with dusty hopes. We sit beside him and near. We hear the exquisite sweetnesses of his guitar. Mike sings of torch-songs, and the sorrow - it bats against our bodies; skims. 