

# SAPPY TIMES

COVETING MERCH SINCE 2009.

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## *Monday*

(looking back on Sunday)

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THERE IS A BLOND KID AT THE BRY WEBB CONCERT WHO IS RUINING THE SHOW, exclaiming "Da-da!" over & over, "Da-da! Da-da! Da-da!", like a broken da-da machine, but the thing is that the blond kid's da-da is actually Bry Webb, and so the kid is not in fact ruining the show, and actually the kid is making this moment shockingly beautiful, heartbreakingly beautiful, pouring life's volatile gorgeous jokes all over these songs, and it is sad when the kid is taken outside with his mum, for a little summer air.

But later Bry performs his song "Asa" and Asa is playing at the end of the aisle, near the entrance to the chapel. Asa is giggling and throwing things and giggling and throwing things and we are all listening so hard, hearing Bry's lullaby and Asa's laughter, and also hearing the gulls, outside, through the bright open doorways. Bry still has a voice like magnets and he wavers for only the faintest second as his boy laughs and burbles, and then Bry tilts his head away from the microphone and sings, without adornment, that he hopes this day is long.

Bry Webb and his band also cover Seal & Crofts' 70s classic "Summer Breeze", with falsetto, with cream-soda horns, and it is like the Mount Allison Chapel has become an AM car radio; like the chapel is an AM car radio and we can ease the pedal to the floor and cruise this chapel right down to Bridge Street.

Sunday is the last day of SappyFest 7. After Sunday, it is put to bed, with beer-tokens on its eyes. I imagine all the things that must be done: the tables folded, the barbecues scrubbed, the honeybuckets voided. Wet and dry recycling must be distinguished between. Men with names like Strong John and Impossible Sandy must wheel equipment into equipment-cases, clasp clasps, coil wires that go on for miles. Tents must be disassembled. Tears must be shed. Someone, inevitably, will barf. SappyFest 7 will not go quietly. It is a lot of work, to make a marvel disappear. It requires skilled labourers, inexhaustible staff, good friends, or capable burglars. Whereas on Sunday Bridge Street was famous, worldwide, for its remarkable main stage, today, Monday, it is simply known for its bridge. It is known for its relics. It is known for the ridiculous lie of its tattered banner, the one that hangs from the windows of #19. *THIS IS NOWHERE*, it reads, as if they could fool anyone.

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I noticed that the stage at SappyFest is a little blacker this year. Like our hearts.

I watch some women do the twist while Deloro play a song about sleep. I swear they really do - a slow twist, a grim twist, a twist that you might do if you knew that you were going to die. While Jennifer Castle sings in quiet trills, while dark & livewire chords keep vamping, these women corkscrew right into the earth, twist all the way to their graves.

**FREE!**

(Continued on the other side of this page.)

"I have to find, like, a new life goal now," says Lucy Niles. This is because the Mouthbreathers are playing SappyFest. Not just are they playing SappyFest - they play one of the 2012 festival's very greatest sets. They explode onto Larry's stage in dumb big smiles, first-timers' smiles, but this chunky catchy punk is not just great because the Mouthbreathers are Sackville first-timers, writing fresh first songs about going to shows, drinking beer, getting your heart broken. The first-time-ness is only part of it. The songs are also great because they are fun and smart and I want to hear every rhyme right away, again. "*Then I drink my coffee / and listen to records / and when I say 'records' / I mean mp3s.*" Beside me, a teenager with braces pumps his wrist and whispers to himself, "Yes." Someone boldly crowdsurfs. The bassist's tongue is folded over in concentration. So much shaky teenage hope, for all of us to borrow.

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I am told the legend of a man named Strong John. He makes things, they say. He drives things from here to there. Strong John helped make SappyFest. He drove SappyFest from here to there. He has red hair & he is as big as city hall, stronger than Jameson, and he can do anything. They say all this about Strong John. He made the stage with his bare hands. He made the tent. He made the sky. He cradled the Talking Exploding Diamond in his herculean fingers. I have never met Strong John but I will tell my children about him, at night, when they are frightened.

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The daisy-chain called Bruce Peninsula lead us in a prayer, beseeching the universe for there to be a SappyFest 8. Then they play a song of pendulum swings, awakening, making hay from the distance between the iris and the eye.

Drums always sound good in a church. It is as if they sweep the dust motes from the air. Cold Specks' drums sweep the dust motes from the air but still she keeps looking around, like she's worried she's been followed. She keeps looking around but mostly she looks *up*, like she mighta been followed by sunbeams or crows. Like if she keeps singing this loud a sunbeam could appear, or a crow, and carry her back to Etobicoke.

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During BA Johnston's song about having a deep fryer in his bedroom ("Deep Fryer in My Bedroom"), he puts the chorus on pause and growls the following command into the microphone: "Just the ladies." And so the ladies coo the chorus back to him, thin and hearty. "I got a deep fryer in my bedroom," they sing,

with voices like canola, grapeseed and sunflower.

BA has other *bon mots*, too. "Bon mots" is French for "dirty zingers". "My failure is a shitty cologne," he rumbles. And: "There are stains on my shirt & I am not wearing a shirt." It's true, he's not. He is standing on a chair in jeans and a scarf, swinging a mic by its wire, singing about "the eye of the douchestorm". Meanwhile, other people are in church.

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Sunday's headliners are not jokers, except a very little bit, between songs. Thee Silver Mount Zion are rockets' roar and rock'n'roll, and the second half of their set is charging majestic: Efrim's crooked shout, that walnut groove, strings. These are rebel songs & here the rebels are kings, headliners, heads of state. "Punk's got the loveliest dreams," Efrim sings, haloed in gold. The end of their set it is like a string of anthems, one anthem after another, all these yearning verses.

(All rise.)

"*SOME HEARTS ARE TRUE*," they shout.

"*SOME HEARTS ARE TRUE*," they shout, all together.

"*WHAT WE LOVED WAS NOT ENOUGH.*"

These anthems are not easy. But anthems are not supposed to be easy. They are not supposed to be just platitudes, mumbled by rote. And this is not easy music. These are harsh songs, with din & distortion & that crooked shout. They are songs of obligation and responsibility, of love.

SappyFest 7 does not end with whiz-bang and pop, not on the main stage. There are no dance moves. It ends with harsh anthems, a frontman who says, "Our current prime minister is a silly fucking turkey."

SappyFest is a wonder. It is a thing that men and women have built, with hard work, with care, with kindness. A weekend of music and art, remarkably curated and deliciously small.

But we go away from SappyFest with more than just the memory of songs & suds. More than ringing ears and suntans. We have learned something, if we are lucky, from this temporary paradise - from the Mouthbreathers' wide smiles, from Woof Woof's show-posters, from Strong John's strength and the gentleness of strangers. SappyFest is not just a rockfest. It's a way of treating yr life. It's an inspiration & an anthem & if we are brave we will take these lessons with us, as obligation and responsibility, as love, into the next four seasons. We will live our lives better than we have, and tear down the silly turkeys who diminish what most matters, and then we will come back here, to SappyFest, for whatever the beautiful hell comes next. 🍻

SAPPY TIMES is written by Sean Michaels. It is published by SappyFest 7. This is the third of three issues, distributed around Sackville as part of the 2012 festival. Sean writes about music for legitimate publications and also at the "blog" Said the Gramophone, which is somewhat less legitimate. He lives in Montreal. He can be reached by email (sean@saidthegramophone.com) or by yelling really, really loud. / Great whoops of thanks to everyone who makes my Sappy sappy, and especially to Paul Henderson, Thea Metcalfe, Judy @ MTA and Meredith.