

SAPPY TIMES

FINDING SYNONYMS FOR "SPLENDOR" SINCE 2009.

Saturday

(looking back on Friday)

August 4, 2012

THE TANTRAMAR MARSHES are on the way to Sackville. Well, for some people. Some people come by other routes. Some people don't even have to *come* here: they already live at the site of SappyFest 7, lucky as silver dollars. But I came by way of the Tantramar Marshes and I whispered the words *tantramar marshes* under my breath and they felt like an incantation. Like a spell. It is presently 4:52 am and I am writing *Sappy Times*, writing about my day, and I still feel as if I am enchanted. *Tantramar marshes tantramar marshes*. I hope you feel enchanted, too. I hope you feel spelled, spelled right out, y-o-u, tantramar marshes. It is a year since the last SappyFest and finally we are back again, together, nowhere and paradise. There are songs to be sung and there is wall-ball to be played, and we are all going to clap, a lot, for a variety of rackets. This must be the place.

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SappyFest 7 kicked off with a vicious hullabaloo. I was kicked by that hullabaloo right in the chest. Smack dab in the middle of ordering a beer when Man Forever's six drummers combusted at the very same second - suddenly this hullabaloo, this racket, this deafening fusillade that I could feel at my sternum. Obviously I forgot about the beer.¹ I re-entered the

¹ This is a lie.

throng. You were probably there. You saw the leaderless flotilla of drummers, playing on carpets, maybe flying carpets, atop the asphalt. You saw the organist, and the guitarist (or was it a bassist?), though you did not hear them. You saw the dancers, dancing spontaneously, or trying to, but it is hard to dance in the eye of a hurricane, in an electrical storm, or at a Man Forever gig. The French word for a drum-kit is *batterie*. Battery. This is apt. There were mixed reactions, in the crowd around the drummers. Some were solemn, like this was a monument, or a lesson, or a wake. Others, on drugs, bobbed their heads like randy wildcats. I saw stupefaction, satisfaction, revulsion, jubilation, fear, but no one was ambivalent to this thing. No one witnessed it unstirred. No one felt *nothing*. Good or ill, we were all, oh, what's the word-- *rocked*.

Nor was there ambivalence for the music of Metz. "That is *mountainous*," I said - literally I said this, out loud, when Metz began to play. I was not ordering a beer but I was outside the tent, smack dab in the middle of *something*, and instantly a wave of pressure seemed to press up from the canvas and billow out to where we were, and you could feel it in your chest, mountainous.

Back inside, it was as if the band were hurling mountains, pieces of mountains, into the crowd. There was a small mosh pit, like a quarry. But most of the audience were not in the mosh pit; most were standing and watching and I think they were feeling that heavy feeling in their chests and thinking: *THIS IS WHAT*

FREE!

(Continued on the other side of this page.)

THIS FEELS LIKE. I am alive and I am right here amid shattering pieces of mountains. I looked around, squinting for dads and granddads and mums and grandmums, for shell-shocked kids, for people who did not look like they often listened to music like this. I looked to see what it said on their faces. And often their faces said something like this, in a slow good realization: *I have felt feelings like the feelings of this song.* I credit this to SappyFest's swamp magic; I credit this to the Tantramar marshes; I credit this to all of you. To contemplate a scary new thing, to turn it over in your hands, instead of just hightailing it back to the Cinnabunny tent.

I was able to parse Metz's lyrics only about as well as I was able to interpret Canailles' joul. The singer even said "Thanks" fast. Clearly they are all twisted up about something. "This one's called 'Dirty Shirt,'" Metz said, and it was like a dirty shirt. They played a song that called "Wet Blanket" and it was like being sick and then shredding a mountain and then yelling "WOO!" and the lights went out.

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Now-- is it wrong for me to hate people with hula-hoops? There is a man at SappyFest 7 with a hula-hoop and I hate him for having a hula-hoop, here at our music festival. He should have left his hula-hoop at the big dumb hula-hoop festival, in dumb-town. I know, I know. Hula-hoop is harmless. Hula-hoop is fun. Have compassion. Show some love. But look at him hula-hooping! He is not even hula-hooping *fast!* He is just getting in the way and trying to trick us into looking at him. Attention is the thing that he craves & so I resolve to ignore the hula-hoop man, to keep from giving him attention, and that plan is going great until I write about him in SAPPY 🐉 TIMES.

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Mike O'Brien and his band perform songs from his handsome, catchy new album; he plays bass and in a way he is bass-fishing, in saltwater, for choruses.

André Ethier's rock'n'roll has more snarl & shriek, with extremely cosmic organ. The organ says, "Neptune, Andromeda, white dwarf." Ethier is a painter so I try to imagine the painting of this music: brown and silver, smears of alleyways, cracked green dashboards with clear hard unsmudged windshield.

YAMANTAKA//SONIC TITAN come out with a black & white dragon, no big deal. While the scene fills with riffs and smoke, the dragon trundles around the crowd. It nudges people. I see one guy, nudged, trying to stay cool. With his eyes he tries to say, to the dude beside him, *Dragon nudge, no big deal.* But it is a big deal. It is a very big deal. When Y//ST finally fully take the stage the lights are like swinging midnight and Ruby Attwood throws the gentlest devils-horns I have ever seen. We are gazing at a red portal into another world. This world involves ethereal howls, chugging guitar, synchronized cymbal crashes, and an eerie sullenness. I say "eerie" because we expect spirits to care what we think. These ones do not. They do not give a shit.

If the spirits were listening I would tell them I would love to hear them do a cover of "Moon River".

Canailles, meanwhile, are like a miniature of young Francophone Montreal: boy-cuties and girl-cuties, with accordions, red squares, extraneous hats. Also, a man from Chicoutimi who looks uncannily like one of Tolkien's dwarves. Canailles lead us in a line dance. They lead us in a group crouch. A boy-cutie yodels at a girl-cutie. Fingersnaps and handclaps. Someone plays the washboard and bicycle-bell. It would all be as innocent as the pure driven snow except the snow runs filthy on rue Papineau and Canailles are singing dirty songs in throaty ribald whoops, firing BB-guns of slang, flirting like teenagers, and all of us like it, even the priests, if SappyFest has priests, which it probably does.

After Canailles play their last song I wish to myself that they would play one more song, and suddenly someone standing nearby begins to chant "One / more / song!" until he changes this to an awkward "*Un / autre / chanson,*" and in a way the bad French is more charming than the English, and I turn to smile at this man who is leading a cheer for the bawdy Montrealers.

I discover it is the man with the hula-hoop.

I end the night by shivering in line for the Music Hall. A man cannot be in all places at once but as I wait in line I become furious and cold. *I could be at Yellow Teeth! I could be at Duzheknew!* But then finally I am taken inside, one of the lucky few, to this place of black mould & shadow. It is a hidden theatre, with a cloud drifting across one wall. Taylor Kirk sings lullabies. We fade toward sleep. My friends are all around, at Roadhouse & Legion & bundled into tents. And I have a feeling: tonight we will all dream of Tantramar. 🐉