

# SAPPY TIMES

## MONDAY

*(Looking back on SUNDAY)*

TWAS A DAY OF LUDICROUS CROWDSURFING, from jackknifing amateurs at the mainstage to the suspect stagedives in the hot press of Thunder & Lightning, somewhere so crowded I have no idea how that woman ever found a spot to slip down. Maybe she's still up there, borne on fingertips. You can say lots of things about crowdsurfing: about courage and foolhardiness, inappropriate musics and experts' technique. What I will say is that it relies on trust. That this dumb throng won't drop you. That this dumb throng will carry you. Under any ludicrous crowdsurfer you find a ludicrously trusty crowd.

SappyFest X rang in its final day & night in a hundred different ways. Universal Dawn had lasik surgery, deep listening, poopypants and clap-aroo. Steve Lambke played songs like whetstones, sharpening our senses. Inexplicably, everywhere he went, he was followed by chants of "coconut!" Speedy Ortiz came from far away, dolefully sprinting. Vogue Dots flickered like underwater fish. D.R. Barclay played records. Bands kept saying, "We have two songs left." Always two: never three or one. Three would be too many, one would be too soon. As Monday got closer, as Sappy wound down, I wanted everywhere to say "Two songs left." I wanted to go to sleep, and close my eyes, and to dream of nothing but two songs left.

Eventually, Sappy will be eleven.

There were six Hay Babies. Disappointingly, none were actual babies. Instead this was a real gang, full-grown, half of them in hats and half of them without. Listening to their scampering folk-rock, that scruffy surf, I imagined Les Hay Babies recruiting new members: this band half-hatted just hanging 'round behind Tantramar Tobacco, testing delinquents' banjo skills. They'd have to sing, too. Here's a band that knows how to sing: three-part harmonies, a trick that always works, you get me every time.

Then they played "Benny and the Jets". This is not a metaphor. Les Hay Babies played actual Benny and actual Jets: tripartite sashay, dance moves, that twirling chorus. "Magazee-eeen," they sang together, and I wanted to subscribe. Later, falsetto happened. The gang was facing its greatest challenge.

Much of Sunday called for sitting on a slope. The weather, the company: we sat in breeze and sunshine, listening to bands. Through the canvas of the tent, everything sounded a little muddy. *This*, I thought, *is what music sounds like to freeloaders*. Vague, like my childhood understanding of credit cards. All those freeloaders sitting on Mount Allison's turf: they crave crisper highs, clearer mids, and they're trying to imagine the look of a band. I listened to the Lonely Parade without seeing them. *They're two girls, two guys, and a centipede*, I decided. *They're the grandchildren of Mark E Smith and Ian Svenonius, sent backward in time to kill them*.

Later I listened to a fight - a punishing war, a group called CROSSS just battering chords, beating up the day. Yet the tigerlilies kept wagging, flags flying, leaves rustling, dogs smiling. The ink was trembling in my pen but SappyFest kept steady. Nothing will take it down.

### Junior Correspondent's Report

Saturday ends and Sunday starts standing on a Sysco truck. The Systems and Services Company. We're in a system that's being serviced. The Sysco truck sits in a dark field by the railroad tracks and people are whispering "secret show". They're whispering because music is being offered as a secret service. My birthday has just ended and Old & Weird play ironically and perfectly until I start to think about how everyone everywhere is always getting older and weirder.

The sun is bright only hours later and I find myself in a porta potty. There are sixteen portable toilets touching uncomfortably like thighs in short shorts and I wonder if people feel old or weird at sixteen.

I think about how on Friday the potties that are portable smelled like bubblegum and everyone probably thought *Hubba Bubba*. I think about the sweet smell in those sixteen potties and I think, *sweet sixteen*. I think about how me and probably you and probably everyone is locking their porta potty behind them and taking a bubblegum breath of relief.

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I think about the banners that hang around the potties and I think about how they compliment the ways I've felt here. The first banner says *ambiguous at best* and I consider the multiple meanings these toilets offer multiple people; this is a chore but also maybe a sanctuary. A second of solitude smelling like bubblegum.

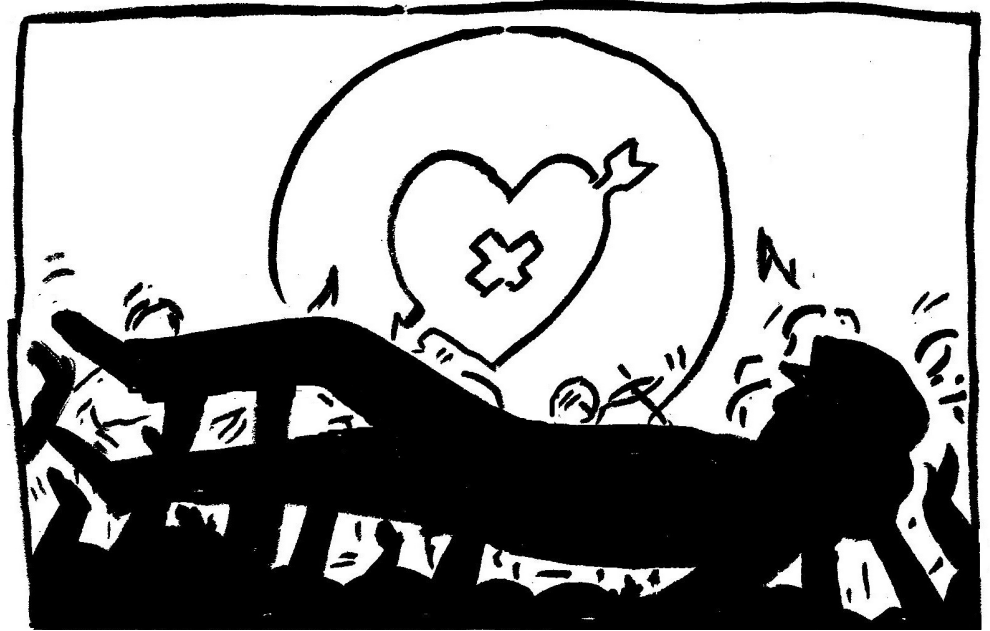
The second banner says *welcome home* and I think maybe this is a joke and also maybe it is right to be welcomed back, bladder full.

The last banner says *swamp magic* and there's an exclamation mark after magic and I think about how magical this swamp really is. It's Sunday night and I no longer smell bubblegum but maybe that's okay.

I think about how I always choose the same porta potty and how this becomes a comfort. I think about returning to places that are small. I think about how small places encourage me to think and so I think.

— by Allison Graves

A friend observes that all the members of Nap Eyes have splendid hair. She is correct. She is a journalist. Me I am less honest. I mostly notice that these players look like mystics. The kind of rude and mannered monks that come into your breakfast nook, sit for a meal, tell esoteric stories; then they egg your house, woo your spouse. Nap Eyes jam out on this perfect Sunday afternoon; sunbeams elongate toward dusk, guitars bend toward some golden mean. We listeners are all now philosophers with record collections, Velvet Underground fans who sometimes attempt to meditate. Figure-eights of groove, unfinished pentacles, longhaired Nigel Chapman begins a call & answer with a squealing guitar. It is as if he is arguing with his garden.



High Seas.

Drawing by Patrick Allaby.

Shotgun Jimmie took the stage in a king's colour: red. He seems a bit of a nervous cowboy as he starts but then the stagedivers are out like a shot and all of us are covered in gunpowder, all of us are into holding hands. "There's enough people here to stay up all night," Jimmie sings. "There's enough people here to start a band, all right." He's right, all right, but I don't feel it in my bones until the encore: "Young Lions," a reprise of SappyFest 9's grand finale, where it's not just some Constantines beside him, roaring, or Human Music, or Adrian Teacher, or Snailhouse or Cat Pontoon or Julie Doiron. It's not just past Sappy performers, alumni: it's the rest of us too, the trusty and the ludicrous; we're gathered one decade deep, ready to start a band or to stay up late, ready for whatever notes come next.

I was still thinking about this later, sardine-squeezed into the bowling alley, waiting for a new band and instead finding Julie Doiron. There in the grey light, beneath a stationary disco ball... Was this a dream? A vision of Sappy past? Was this now or then? Julie stood with Mike F and sang about December,

loud & whispered at the same time. The candlepins waited in the back of the room, dreaming of what will fell them. And Julie and Mikey, semi-transparent, almost impossible, sang softly about a winter past or future.

But the last thing that happened to me, that really happened to me inside SappyFest's first ten, is that the band called Partner finally filled the stage. They are young, former scamperers and mouthbreathers. They are old, old enough to drink beer and smoke hash, make trouble. All things change. Mostly they're a rock band. Partner exchanged three glances and turned everything on and all at once they had started a song, thunderous, proud, drumroll & shout, bewilderingly tight: "WE'RE PARTNER," yelled two women, in harmony. "WE'RE COMING TO YOUR TOWN." And then a fuse blew. It blew instantly, completely. The best things in the world are always too much for us: Partner had shorted the place. These ambitious slackers. These young lions. *Looks like we made it, claim the signs.* The secret is this: *No, we didn't.*

SappyFest is still being made.

*Sappy Times* is written by Sean Michaels and the 2015 Junior Correspondents, Allison Graves, Miranda Jones & Brennan McCracken, with a daily illustration by Patrick Allaby. This is the third of three issues distributed around Sackville as part of SappyFest 10. Sean is the author of the novel *Us Conductors* & founder of the archaic music-blog *Said the Gramophone*. He lives in Montreal. Allison, who contributes today's Correspondent's Report, is a student and writer based in St John's. Special thanks to Lucas "Leonine" Hicks, Jody Zinner, Thea Metcalfe, Janice Melanson, Matt Tunnacliffe, Paul Henderson, every volunteer & billeter. You can reach *Sappy Times* by email at [sean@saidthegramophone.com](mailto:sean@saidthegramophone.com)