

SAPPY TIMES

SATURDAY

(Looking back on FRIDAY)

SOMEONE HAS LOST A SHOE, maybe all of us have lost our shoes, I can't tell any more, I can't feel my feet, my eyes are in the air, and I'm smiling with my whole face at a band that's a three-letter word, like 'lip' or 'map' or 'bud.'

Someone lost a shoe and PUP have paused their set to ask, "Whose shoe is this?" But almost as soon as they've asked it they are back to making their loud sound, their punk music like a gladder Jawbreaker, my friend says, or like crackling jawbreakers in your teeth, I say. And it's music that makes you long to put your hands in the air and point at things - to have things worth pointing at. I point at a blue moon, through the screen of the York Street tent. I point at the potted plants at the foot of the stage. PUP are clearing away the flowerpots to accommodate the moshers. This is nice of them: three black-clad knaves and one loudmouth in white, attending to greenery. We in the crowd are wearing all sorts of colours, all sorts of stripes, jean jackets and button-ups and mini-skirts and cargo pants and midriff tops and Electric Howlers shirts. An infinite variety, and PUP turned all of us into burly maniacs. Burliness is in the eyes of the collider.



Welcome (back) to SappyFest. The tenth edition: after nine, before eleven, officially double digits. SappyFest 10 is SappyFest X. Maybe the X stands for Excellent, maybe for Extraordinary,

maybe for X-ray of Xylophone. I like to think it stands for Ex - an old flame, a former lover (because let's be honest, there are lots of them around). Hopefully it does not stand for Execrable.

This year's festival did not begin explosively, exhibitionistically or excruciatingly. It started very quietly, with a moment that was almost invisible. At six-twenty-something, before the first band had even started playing, a very young woman was sitting on stage, atop an amplifier, holding a sparkling red guitar. She was plucking at it slowly; head down, eyes open; waiting for her band; waiting for the chance to get started, waiting for all of us. She was full of awe & fear & trepidation & the knowledge that once all this began, there was no stopping it.

A little while later, the guitarist was joined by her wonderful group, the Electric Howlers. The band-members' average age was approximately eight years old. They played "The Nonsense Song," with its madness of pancakes. They played "Howl At the Moon," with cascading howls and an amazing, squelching synth riff. But the highlight was an untitled song about the Howlers' "love of Sackville." Fittingly, it was lilting. Equally fittingly, it was a dirge. The tottering number seemed ripped straight from the Velvet Underground & Nico songbook: a singer dressed in baby blue, her voice all baby blue, a performance as pretty as a stencilled banner fluttering in the wind.

Also, there was a wolf playing drums.

Throughout Friday night, the main-stage was stalked by an enemy. Not a diminutive, lupine percussionist, not a burly maniac: just a sound. It was a sound that sounded like two years crashing into each other. Like a planet dying, or a stroke, or, as PUP put it, a "crazy robot dubstep voice." It was some kind of deafening, catastrophic technical glitch, a problem with the soundboard, random and terrible. It should now be fixed. But last night it was out there, prowling. It struck during Heat's hot jams, sprang from behind Last Ex's dry, haunted vistas.

Jennifer Castle was tying loops with her baying voice - a cat's-cradle of rambling folk music, signs & symbols. A sailboat, a sheepdog, a vow, an estrangement-- now an earsplitting **ZONK** of sound. She went on, untroubled.

But Michael Feuerstack started a little quake. The technical tremors and then some hesitation in his voice - until the band seemed to make a decision, raising their instruments, tearing their own fissures down the main street. Nick Cobham played guitar like the earth was heaving under his feet, like his house was falling down. By the time Feuerstack played "Apple," they had erected a new landscape: the power of the oscillating tone, feedback drone. "Clackity Clack" was just stunning, the drums exactly stumbling: a song of "arrows falling" and then again there came that **ZONK** of noise, like one of the arrowheads had hit home.

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FREE!

FILED FUMBLINGLY AT 6:47AM

 SAPPYFEST N°10

MAIN SECTION CONTINUED

Junior Correspondent's Report

by Miranda Jones

Perched above Mel's Tea Room at 2 AM, I collect my first impressions of the Sappy kingdom. Everyone's arriving, by any means necessary – by foot, by plane, by bus, by friend of a friend. Flags dapple the downtown, all shouting, "X marks the spot!" You're here. You've found us. But who's "us"?

We're the ones making connections – with Sing-A-Longs, with piggyback rides, with taps on the shoulder, with toothy grins that say we're both so lucky to be here. The potted plants lining the stage make me feel like I'm in my living room. They make me feel like I'm on the doorstep.

I take in *The Water Thief* at the Anglican Church, and it lifts a fog I didn't know had settled. In what is strangely just one hour, I am invited to wash my face, I get swallowed by a whale, I meet a man who I'm still convinced was a ghost. During some of these moments, I feel like I've never heard or seen anything clearer. The time is so drawn out and the space so endless that I leave with twenty more years under my belt. Beautiful Acadian choir songs and glowing spectres follow me back down Main Street to the festival tent.

In the early hours I enter a packed Legion, met by the ever-cool Moss Lime. Heavy bass lines, assured vocals and drums that sting. "I don't wanna tell you/ I shouldn't have to tell you." They don't want to have to tell us it's bedtime.

Hours earlier, the young tots of the daytime stole the spotlight running rampant in front of the stage with their giant blue headphones. They moshed, attempted handstands, held hugging contests and lay down when it was all too much. They have enough energy to power all of New Brunswick. They stood brave, mouths open, eyes to their stars.



Once in a blue moon.

Drawing by Patrick Allaby.

Throughout all of this, through everything, D. R. Barclay is in a room at 2 Bridge Street, playing records. The room is full of streamers, balloons, every kind of faded music. Barclay is alone with one toothbrush, two turntables, some beautiful flowers. There is a solitary tube of toothpaste. We need to keep checking on Barclay to make sure he doesn't go crazy: for the length of SappyFest X, 57 straight hours, he has vowed to keep selecting records. When I last dropped in, he was talking to himself. He was almost out of liquids. He was listening to Kurtis Blow's "Christmas Rapping". Will Barclay sleep? Too soon to tell. Will he run out of Perrier water? Not if you bring him some. He is a brave madman, a Sappy mystic: perhaps, by Monday morning, he will attain nirvana. Perhaps he'll have a vision of Bridge Street's new asphalt. In the meantime, go see him. Or listen in: twitch.tv/drbarclay, and across illegal pirate radio - 88.3 FM.



The way I ended my Friday night was by staying up til dawn writing this

damn thing. But before that I went to the Guided By Voices sing-along, at Struts, to hang out with pals and bananas and people singing old indie songs, from the years before dubstep and **ZONK**. "This one's a bit of a clusterfuck," admitted the master of ceremonies. But still we bellowed the words, the arcane rhymes about love, disease and hunting knives, clutching our daffy hymnals. Standing there, I imagined a kid coming in, a 19-year-old scamp who had never heard of Guided By Voices. The kid'd see us all: a dashing MC and a fine electric guitarist, his licks like a daiquiri headache; a choir of straining voices; photocopies; fruit-coloured light; rhymes about love, disease and hunting knives. No wiser, the kid'd think *we* were GBV. The kid'd fall head over heels. And then a little later a DJ would come out, in a gorilla suit, to start the dance party. A gorilla suit because it's DJ Coconuts, who plays the same track every time, Harry Nilsson's "Coconut." I'm telling you that's what I imagined: me and the kid, me and you, me and we, we a weeeeeee, dancing til Monday, singing about lime, cheering endlessly for the same beloved song.

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 first of three issues distributed around Sackville as part of SappyFest 10. Sean is the author of the novel *Us Conductors* and founder of the archaic music-blog *Said the Gramophone*. He lives in Montreal. Miranda, who contributes today's Correspondent's Report, makes theatre in Halifax. Special thanks to Lucas "Burly Maniac" Hicks, designer Jody Zinner, Judy @ MTA, Thea Metcalfe, Janice Melanson, all the volunteers and billetes. You can reach *Sappy Times* by email at sean@saidthegramophone.com.