

ENTERTAINMENT

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Creating the Creature... and other such stories, as told by Moist

PAT FITZPATRICK
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Hot off the release of their sophomore album, *Creature*, Moist secured the spot of the opening act on Neil Young's current tour. The increased exposure should shoot the band into an even higher stratosphere than Silver could reach.

Paul Wilcox, Moist's drummer, talked about the band's origins, brief-but-busy history and, of course, the Neil Young tour. (F denotes Fitzpatrick, P denotes Paul.)

"We created a monster — a 'Creature,' if you will."
— Paul Wilcox,
Moist

F: So you're having a busy day, I take it?

P: Yeah, we're just putting the finishing touches on getting ready for opening up for Neil Young tonight here in Vancouver.

F: So you've done setup and soundcheck and all that fun stuff?

P: No, that has yet to happen.

F: God knows how many times you folks have had to answer this question, but how did you arrive at the name "Moist"?

P: Well, there was a version of the band with that name that Mark (Makovy, bassist) and Jeff (Pearce, guitarist) were in beforehand, and that disbanded for a while and when it reformed with the new members, that was the best name we could come up with at that time.

F: So have you guys known each other for a while?

P: Yeah, I'm the only person actually from Vancouver, the rest of the guys went to [Queen's University] together in Kingston, Ontario.

F: So what was your school of choice? College, university, the school of life?

P: A little bit... I did some recording arts courses, but the rest was basically motivated by my desire to make music. That's what I've pretty much always been interested in.

F: You were the last member of the band to join then? What's the chronology there?

P: Yep, I was the last to join. O.K. — Mark and Jeff were in the original, then the band disbanded. They stuck it out together. Kevin (Young, guitarist) and Dave (Usher, vocalist) were together doing some song writing and what have you.

They all joined to form the band and there was a revolving door thing happening with the drummer — they went through a number of them and then finally settled on me. We got together for the MusicWest conference and that really got the ball rolling. From there, we went on our first tour a couple months later. That was in 1993.

F: So you guys have been touring quite a bit ever since?

P: Well, for the last year or so we've been focused on the new album, so not much touring there.

The philosophy of Phil

GREG TUCKER
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Phil Reynolds is as pleasurable to talk to as he is to listen to. His first full length compilation of songs can be found on his debut album *Big Front Door* (PR Music). His strong emphasis on song writing can be heard throughout this album and it is backed up by his personality.

This album is a blend of soft, melodic harmonies, as well as faster, quick paced tunes. Phil states, "For me, it's the song and the performance of the song that is important." This notion is clearly upheld in his songs. His songs are a combination of storytelling and rhythm, with a nice dulcet flow that leaves a definite tune in the listener's mind. Mr. Reynolds seems to be quite content

F: So was *Creature* a little more intense than *Silver*?

P: Well yeah (chuckle), *Silver* was recorded in basically six days and we recorded everything live off the floor and just went — bang, bang, bang. Very limited overdubs. For all intents and purposes this is our first record. *Silver* was actually a demo, really. We weren't getting any interest from any record companies, so we released our own CD first off. It started to get some airplay, then we got the video to run on MuchMusic, which was great as an independent act. The record company bought the whole package

from us. From then on, we simply started working with them. *Creature* is more of a cohesive mix and was written as a record and seems to flow a lot more smoothly. It's not too much of a departure from our first sound, but it definitely just fits.

F: Consensus seems to be that it's a more finished product, that you folks had a lot more time to run this one through.

P: Absolutely. Plus we had a little bit of a budget on this one, which certainly helped. ... To tell you the truth, we were thinking that it would take a little over two months to get it all done. But it kept on going. We created a monster — a "creature" if you will. It just went on and on.

F: So, do you remember playing Fredericton at the AUC, Paul?

P: Yes I do! I think we had a great show in Fredericton.

F: Did you folks manage to figure out the acoustics of the Aiken Centre?

P: It was a little boomy, but it was a great gig though. We had a really fun time with the crowd — it was a great crowd. That was the first time we actually played in Fredericton, which is kind of silly when you consider that we have been on the road for two and a half years.

F: Well, we kind of wondered when you guys would eventually find your way through here.

P: Well yeah, it's weird. We hadn't had the chance to get through there before. But we're going to be going back to Fredericton again after Christmas, that's for sure. The closest we'll be making it this time is Saint John.

F: With Neil Young and Crazy Horse?

P: You got it. In the past, we've been all over the world. We try to go where the record is moving to keep supporting it. It's rather odd that we hadn't been there until September.

F: So what about Neil Young. Is this your first show tonight?

P: First show tonight. We've got ten gigs in 17 days across Canada and then we'll be doing Buffalo and Hartford. We'll have to see after that. It was some pretty good news, though. I mean, we heard that they were up for the tour. You always

little too into [the songs] yourself." Phil says, "It's good to bring other people in and get somebody else's opinions on it." In addition to Phil's electric guitar is Mr. Achen's 12-string guitar on "Home," and Mr. Deschamps' pedal steel guitar on "Jealous Heart" and his Dobro on "Sweet Jenny" and "Lost and Found." All three of these songs are left in your mind long after the song is over. When asked what he would like the audience to take away from his concert, Mr. Reynolds simply adds, "When [after the concert] someone is whistling that song a few minutes later, or humming it, that's neat. That's the sign of a good tune, if you can, within three or four minutes, get them singing it." In a time of guitar licks and riffs, this album is a nice change. Phil plays with a modern style that made Arlo Guthrie and Jim Croce popular.

If you want to catch his live act, Phil will be playing at The Cellar on the UNB campus on November 1st.

hear that you're up for this or up for that, so we just wind up saying "Great, if we get it that's nice. If not, then that's life. Tell me if it's finalized or not." We really didn't expect it to happen, and then soon after, we were told that we got it. I was just dumbfounded. I was in Montreal when I heard that we got it, and basically blew my phone bill through the roof calling everybody that I knew to let them know. He's the king, the Godfather of modern music. It's definitely pretty cool for us.

F: So what happens after the Neil Young gigs?

P: I don't really know, to tell you the truth. I'm not even sure if he (Young) is continuing on tour after Hartford, so we'll have to see. We'll be doing our own cross-Canada tour after that though. We'll start the last week of January and go through until some time in March.

F: Are you planning on hitting mostly college towns or large centres?

P: Pretty much everything we can get. Everything and anything as much as we can. The official announcement will come after the Neil Young tour. We're really looking forward to it, it's been a while since we've done a full-on tour of Canada. Almost two years now, and even that one was only twelve gigs and we missed so many spots. We had a really narrow window of time to do it in the Winter of 1994 and we had to fit it in between Christmas and another tour we did with Collective Soul down in the States. We couldn't get everywhere we wanted to and missed a lot of places, notably New Brunswick.

Problem is that once you get a bit of heat going, you really have to move to where the record is selling best and fit that into the rest of the time constraints that you face. We had a bit of a scatter-gun approach to touring. We went to the UK six times over the course of the first record and that was a bit much. We spent most of two or three months over there. I mean, it was great. We have a top 20 single over there.

F: Push?

P: Yeah, Push. So it was nice from that point of view. We released it and got a great response.

F: So tell me about Thailand...

P: Thailand... Well... LAUGH. We went there to have a little holiday as well as to work. We went there and did some song writing, believe it or not. Really, we did. (Laugh), when we were down in the South of Thailand on the beach. Well, we did about an hour a day, and then go play in the water or whatever. We went to Bangkok for the last week and actually played an acoustic show and a full-on electric show. David, our singer, is actually half Thai, so they made quite big deal out of that, to the extent that people were waiting for us at the airport. They don't get a lot of Western bands there, so they wound up hanging out in the lobby of our hotel 24 hours a day for the duration of our stay. It was really sweet, but a little, well, surprising to see that sort of reaction. We had never been there before, that was my first time in Asia.

F: And the crowds there?

P: Really good crowd, they were really responsive. Everyone seemed to get very much into the show and had a great time. We did one show in Bangkok and packed the auditorium and they were going just nuts. They knew

the record awfully well. They were a wide-ranging crowd from 15 to 30 or so, but mostly younger.

F: Influences. What do you guys claim as influences?

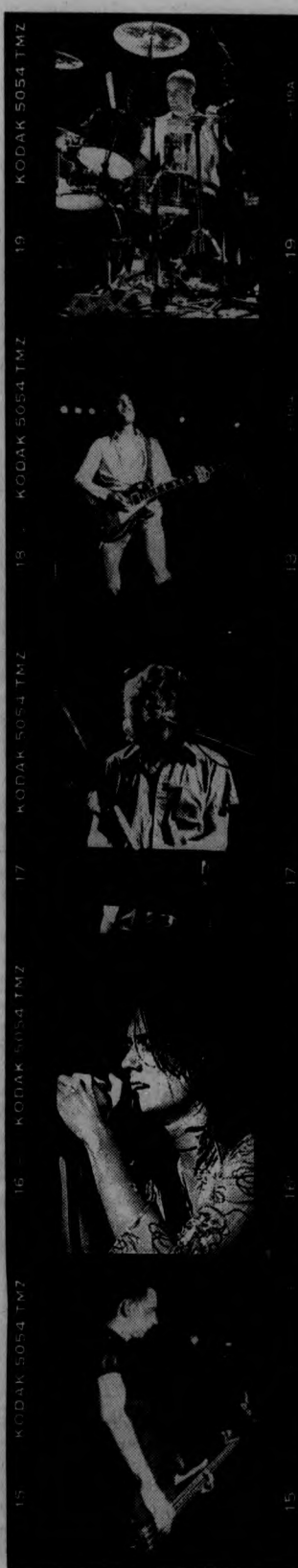
P: Man, we are so all over the place it is all over the place. Together, we would cover just about everything. I can't even start.

F: Anyone into country & western?

P: (Laugh.) That would be about the only thing we're not into. Very astute of you there...

There's a little bit of jazz, a little bit of funk, some heavy stuff. All over the place, really. Everyone puts their two cents in and we get a final product that seems to read as an average of what everyone wants.

Paul speaks not only for the band, but for the fans as well. The Neil Young concert in Saint John has been sold out for weeks, and Moist should reap big rewards from the tour.



PAT FITZPATRICK PHOTOS

Bringing 'Spirit' to the East

ANTHONY S. DAVIS
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Spirit of the West is touring the Maritimes again, and that means three things. First off, Tuesday, in Fredericton, a lot of beer will be consumed at Sweetwaters. Second, a whole bunch of people are going to have whiplash Wednesday from dancing so much. And third, the Spirit of the West fans will get their yearly fix of an SOTW live show. So, Wednesday, those people rubbing their necks, hung over and in a daze will easily be identified as SOTW fans.

The band's current Maritime tour—their most extensive Maritime tour to date—is in support of their 1995 album *Two Headed*. Though this album is very guitar-oriented, the show promises to have the traditional Spirit of the West favourites from albums such as *Save This House*, *Tipping up the Stairs*, and *Go Figure*.

On the business side of things, it is quite an unusual situation that the band has found themselves in. They have released two albums in the past year—

Spirit of the West is notoriously known for their highly energetic live shows. On seeing the crowd from the stage side, Kelly says, "It's what keeps you going." It pleases Kelly that the people have taken time to come and see them, because "we really have very little success with radio and video. ... We're not really a commodity, [and] not as known as, say, the Barenaked Ladies."

The SOTW following is built on a good feeling atmosphere, and anyone who attends their shows knows how they make you feel at home. "We take the entertainment side of it very seriously," Kelly says. This is refreshing to hear, as so many musicians seem to have forgotten that their fans are seeing them to be entertained, and are not just there to support the band's lifestyle.

Last year, SOTW played in Fredericton at the Aiken Centre for Frosh Week, and this show sticks in their memories for its lack of functional security. The security did not understand that the band did not want people to crowd surf to their music, and the show came to a temporary halt

"We really have very little success with radio and video. ... We're not really a commodity."

— Geoff Kelly,
Spirit of the West

and-a-half: *Two Headed* and *Open Heart Symphony* (1996). The reason they are not touring in support of the new album but its predecessor is because of the musicians required to perform the *Open Heart Symphony* material. The *Open Heart* album was recorded live with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, but because of the cost and difficulty of arranging for an orchestra to tour, the band has decided that it would not perform any material from that album. Geoffrey Kelly, one of the band's founding members, says "It sounds very empty [without an orchestra]. ... We are hoping to come through anywhere that has a symphony [to perform with] next year."

So while the band is not playing anything from the critically acclaimed *Open Heart* album, the songs they do play will be a mix of the favourites that have risen them to their current stature, and newer material from *Two Headed*, so it should be a great mix.

SOTW formed in its most basic form in 1983, with members John Mann (guitar, vocals) and Kelly (guitar, flute, whistles, harmonica, bodhran, and vocals). Over the years, the band grew to its current size, with musicians Hugh McMillan (guitar, bass, vocals, Chapman stick, and much more), Vince Dirlich (drums, percussion, vocals) and Linda McRae (bass, accordion, vocals). Right now, however, the band is going through a changing stage, and the most significant is the upcoming departure of long time member McRae. She is set to leave the band at the end of the year to work on her own projects which have been on hold for a few years. Says Kelly, "It is something she has needed to do for a while. When we first met her she was quite a prolific songwriter ... [and] we sort of scooped her away from all of that." Kelly does not feel that this will hold the band back at a time like this; in fact, he says, "I think we could use the impetus of a new musician at this time."

There are several reasons to see SOTW this Tuesday. First, they are so good how could anybody willingly pass up the chance to see them? Secondly, this is probably the last time chance you will get to see the band perform with Linda McRae. And thirdly, the more people that come out to this show, the better the chance they will return for a symphonic performance in Fredericton.

KNOW WHERE TO GO?

ARTS

- QWERTY launch at Picaroons. Oct. 27, 7:30 pm. Info: 453-4686.
- *Actual Art/Virtual Viewing* at Memorial Hall. Until Oct. 27. Free.
- Janice Wright Cheney & Carol Collicutt display at Old Arts Building. Until Nov. 16. Free.

FILM

- Capital Film Society, *Flirting with Disaster* at Tilley Hall. Oct. 28, 8 pm. \$3 members, \$5 non-members.

MUSIC

- Quartango at Memorial Hall. Oct. 30, 8 pm. \$18 adults, \$10 students. Info: 457-2233.
- Spirit of the West, Booming Airplanes and Starbucker at Sweetwaters. Oct. 29, 8 pm.
- Zumpino, Superfriends, Hercules, Steaming Toolie at Rye's Deli. Oct. 26, 8 pm. \$5.
- Natalie MacMaster at The Playhouse. Oct. 26, 8 pm.

THEATRE

- *Antigone* at Memorial Hall. Oct. 31 - Nov. 2, 8 pm. \$5 adults, \$4 students.

PHIL REYNOLDS
COURTESY ARNIE DYKER MANAGEMENT