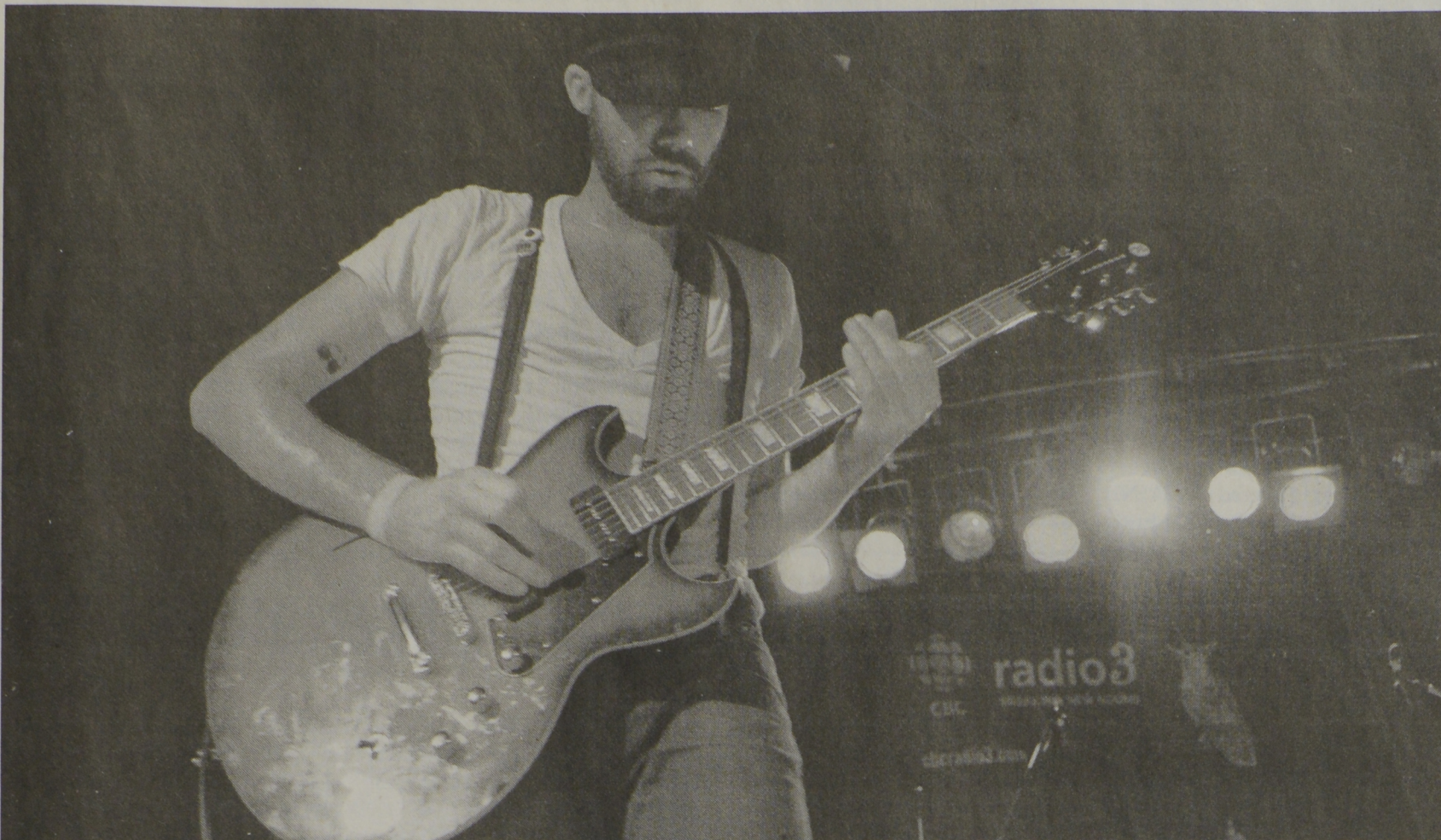
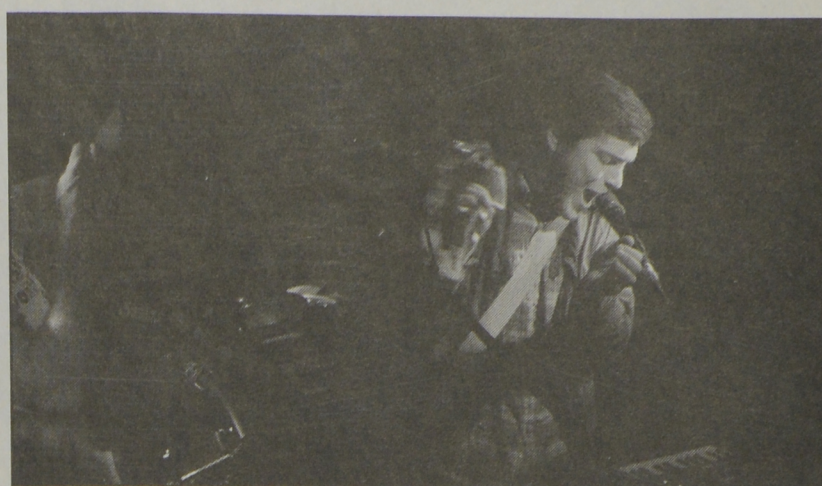


FEAR AND LOATHING IN HALIFAX



Christian Haggood / The Brunswickan



Doug Estey / The Brunswickan



Doug Estey / The Brunswickan

(Above) Toronto's Sebastien Grainger and the Mountains rocked the stage at this year's Halifax Pop Explosion. (Top right) Atlantic acts Two Hours Traffic and (bottom right) Sports: the Band appeared alongside him at the HPX. All three acts also played the Capital this week in Fredericton.

JOSH O'KANE
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Three years ago, I missed a chance to see Death from Above 1979, and I've regretted it ever since.

I had just started a new job working nights at a call centre in Saint John, and by the time I got to the bar that the dance-punk duo were playing at, the bar had reached max capacity.

When I found out that Sebastien Grainger, the former drummer and vocalist for DEA 1979, was playing at the Halifax Pop Explosion, I jumped at the chance to go. Bruns Production Editor Christian Haggood was already headed to the city with a friend, so I hopped aboard.

What a weekend. I arrived in town Friday night, too late to see such acts as Holy Fuck and Two Hours Traffic, but with plenty of good music still available to hear. After grabbing a case of beer from the Mic Mac Mall, I dropped by an old friend's place and got ready for a night of music.

My buddy Greg and I had some brews, chatted about old times (we both went to UNBSJ – he later transferred to St. FX, and I UNBF), and most importantly, listened to Sebastien Grainger tunes from his myspace on my crappy MacBook speakers. At about 11, we headed out to the Seahorse Tavern to catch a HPX show.

The Seahorse was a quaint little underground bar with a lot of scene points (note: if you don't know what

scene points are, you don't have any, and also don't move to Halifax). The first thing I saw was probably the strangest excuse for music I've ever seen.

(Swedish) Death Polka – apparently neither Swedish, nor Polka, and certainly not worth dying for – was on stage. Except instead of a band, as expected, it was a guy playing a synth loop on a laptop, and playing the world's most awkward makeshift drum kit while standing up. All he had was a snare, crash and floor tom, and he seemed to have a hard time keeping time with the music. He did this for four or five similar synth loops before he was joined by a guitarist whose guitar I couldn't hear. My favourite musician in the band was the laptop.

Greg and I made the executive decision after a few drummed-over-synth-loops to go to the bar and get a beer. We decided to stay there until the next band.

Sports the Band was intriguing as their name sounds. They had a mellow folk-rock sound infused with synths that really worked. I was a big fan.

The concert left me in a good mood. Sports the Band outdid all the awkwardness of (Swedish) Death Polka. So in this mood, did I go to bed? No. Did I go to Casino Nova Scotia, promise the bouncer I only drank six beer, and drop \$60 on blackjack and penny slots?

Maybe. I woke up at noon on Saturday on the floor of Greg's apartment with a good outlook and a slightly emptier wallet. After a brief stop for

breakfast, we went where any bright 21-year-olds would go at 1 p.m. – the liquor store.

Sebastien Grainger was to play an all ages show that afternoon, and Greg suggested we be adequately prepared. By prepared, he meant we would be shooting Irish Whiskey and chasing with beer as fast as we could before the show. So we did.

Fast forward an hour later, and Greg and I are running up Citadel Hill in an effort to reach the Pavilion faster. I ran further than Greg. But that doesn't matter. What matters is that we made it.

Grainger can croon. He did it in DEA 1979 and he did it again with his new backing band The

folks from Mt. Allison's student paper, the Argosy, pressured me to go interview Grainger. So I did. Armed with Greg's iPhone and no prepared questions, I approached him and interviewed on the fly. He was happily responsive.

It turns out he's always wanted to play guitar in a band.

"It's easier to be a singer while playing guitar," he said. "It was more difficult playing drums. When I was in that position it never felt quite like I was a singer or quite like a drummer so it was somewhere in between. It was its own thing and it had its own merits as a part of that band, but it's nothing I was destined to continue."

"I wanted to do something else ...

"THIS IS ROCK AND ROLL AS FUCK"

—GREG LAWSON

Mountains. I was pretty impressed. Very impressed. Apparently, he's been working with The Mountains for two years already, and it showed. The band was tight as hell and knew how to put on a show. Despite the fact that there weren't many kids around at the show, they made it worth it.

The Mountains are significantly more upbeat than DEA 1979, but still have the same powerful wall-of-sound feel to them. Grainger abandoned the drums and picked up a guitar and it suits him just as well. I'd been anxious to see this new Grainger project since I heard some album demos in February and he delivered tenfold. He's gone seamlessly from dance-punk to pop-rock, and it's definitely worth checking out.

After the show, Greg and some

I've always played guitar but never in a band, so this is been kind of a journey for me as a guitar player as well which is fun."

Greg and I went to grab some supper and then I crashed on his floor for an hour before meeting a friend of his and going out to a party in a suburb called Clayton Park.

The party turned out to be filled with twenty- and thirty-somethings with grown-up jobs and nice clothing. Somehow, I had gone from being surrounded by scenesters in downtown Halifax to professionals in a suburb. It was an intriguing transition. I was about five degrees of separation from knowing the guy who owned the house, but that didn't seem to matter. By 11 p.m. I was playing drinking games with him on his kitchen table. No problem there.

At that point I had to bid adieu, and hopped in a cab to go to the Marquee. I ran into Christian and another one of my roommates, both of whom were there to see Sebastien Grainger and the Mountains. It was a good show, yet again – they'd lost no energy since the previous show. The Marquee was filled with people and good vibes.

After the show I cabbed to the Seahorse once again to catch another band I've wanted to see for a while – White Cowbell Oklahoma. I met Greg outside and we entered the lineup. The venue had reached max capacity, so they weren't letting anyone in. Not cool. It took us 45 minutes to get through the line as people slowly

filtered out. Greg almost lost hope, but I managed to keep him interested enough to forge

hell out of that pumpkin. Greg's jaw dropped.

"This is rock and roll as fuck."

Indeed it was.

Pumpkin seeds and juice spewed all over the crowd, covering everyone near the stage from head to toe. And if that wasn't enough, the bassist from Iron Giant was dancing naked, except for a clown mask, behind the drumkit for the entire chainsawing.

Awesome.

Combine this event with an actually-flaming cowbell and you've got one great show. White Cowbell Oklahoma have played in Fredericton before, and you owe it to yourself to see them when they come back.

At the end of the show, I asked Charlie Chainsaw the one question everyone was begging to ask: why is he so awesome?

"I was born awesome. I was born that way, god damn it. My daddy was awesome before me, and his daddy before him. I come from a long line of, uh, chainsaw background. I don't intentionally mean to be awesome, it's just a complete by-product of everything that I am and everything I do."

Definitely awesome.

The show was over, and so was the Pop Explosion. But that didn't quite hit me then. Maybe because I was covered in pumpkin.

For unabridged interview transcripts with Sebastien Grainger and Charlie Chainsaw, check out thebruns.ca.

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Grants: NB lends music a hand

FROM GRANTS PAGE 1

what was going to happen. It came at an opportune time where both The Olympic Symphonium and Grand Theft Bus could focus on their new records."

In the light of the recent criticism attributed to government-funded arts programs, Boyle claims that the attacks that the arts industry has sustained over the past year are poorly grounded.

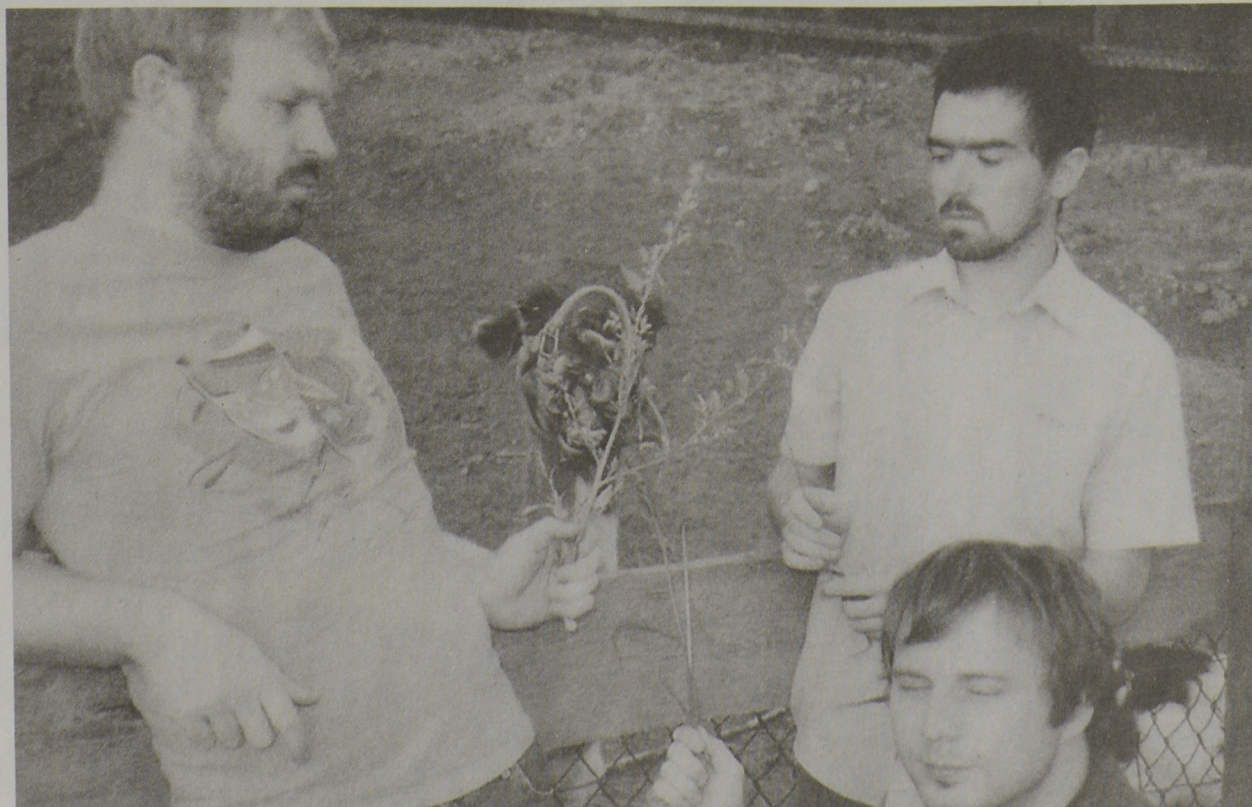
"The point is that no one is making big money off of these grants. Even the most popular bands in the area still have to sacrifice a lot.

Canada is a country with a large land mass and a small population; a country that physically can't support the arts as much as it wants to.

That's where the government comes in and needs to contribute to their culture. Cutbacks result in a loss of our international identity."

Cunjak shares a similar view. "Steven Harper is dead wrong when he says that we don't need arts funding.

For music, and art in general, it takes a lot of time to actually do your craft and you don't make any money



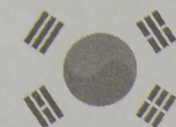
Fredericton's own The Olympic Symphonium will receive \$20,000 per year over three years as a part of the Music Industry Development Program.

from it until after a lot of investment on your part.

In the real world, these programs are necessary. Unless you have a Sugar Daddy, which we don't."

For this week's web-exclusive content,
including David Usher and a book review,
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Question and Answer Session - Oct 29, (Wed) from 5pm
UNB, Marshall D'Avary Room 356