

The turkey dump



POP TART

Ashley Bursey

It's never been my favourite time of year. A holiday that centres around the massacre of a poor, defenseless animal just leaves me feeling a bit down in the dumps.

I gave up eating meat almost a decade ago. It's not because I thought steak and giblets were particularly disgusting; I was just the animal-lover kid who, after learning where her dinner really came from, decided to lay pepperoni and burgers to the wayside in favour of tofu and textured vegetable protein.

It's a tough game to play, and not many people know the rules. Back home, no one quite understands that I can't just "eat around the turkey" in soup made from Thanksgiving leftovers.

I spent this past Thanksgiving on Prince Edward Island. I carted along my own version of "turkey dinner" – a "fake" chicken breast made from soy products, something that looked comfortable next to mashed potatoes and stovetop dressing.

On the Saturday before, we had stopped into a gas station to discover that one of the province's bigger newspapers had decided to celebrate the upcoming holiday in a most unconventional way.

"Tough Time for Turkeys!" blared the front-page headline, underneath a rather prominent picture of cheerful-looking turkeys from a local farm.

Apparently, the paper noted, a few of these particular birds were already spoken for, and their local farmer was preparing the rest for a spectacular feast – so hurry up, folks, and this here purty little turkey might be only hours away from roasting in your oven.

I'm pretty sure my eyes fell straight out of my head. The rest of the world eats meat and I'm okay with that. I don't really condone it, and I'd

prefer if everyone else took a page out of PETA's playbook, but I know that's not always the reality of the situation.

But this was just too much.

It's one thing to buy a turkey at a grocery store; it's a faceless, nameless slab of meat, just another product to toss into the cart alongside lima beans and a loaf of French bread.

This particular option, however, just seemed – well – fowl.

I understand the desire for fresh food. I really do. I like a nice crispy head of lettuce as much as the next guy. But when your dinner starts clucking back at you, pecking at you – doesn't it start to rattle your thinking a little bit?

It's the personal touch that really kills me (no pun intended). Imagine lining up your kids, pulling on scarves and hats and boots and ushering them out the door. "We're going to the farm!" the parents say cheerily. "Are you ready to meet your meat?"

They arrive, rosy-cheeked and giggling, peeking at turkeys and chickens and perhaps a pig or two. "Which one do you like, Jimmy?" Dad might ask, pointing to a particularly plump fowl. "How about that one?"

Jimmy and sister Susie agree; that one looks like a nice friendly chap. So Dad pays the man behind the counter, grabs the turkey, and with a solid thwack – Turkey's head has been neatly separated from his body and he's all ready to be plucked and stuck into a roasting pan for someone's delicious Thanksgiving dinner.

Meanwhile, Jimmy and Susie are traumatized for life, forever wondering why they have an unnatural fear of axe-wielding woodsmen and red flannel shirts.

And there you have it. Meet your meat. The fun factor of personally making the acquaintance of the innocent animal you're about to slaughter.

It's bad enough you have to eat them. But do we really need the introduction first?

Ashley Bursey is a former Arts Editor of The Brunswickian.

Jill Barber takes a chance

ALISON CLACK
THE BRUNSWICKIAN

It takes courage for an artist to take a chance and change their musical style. That's exact what Jill Barber did on her ironically-titled new album, Chances.

Although Barber has a strong fan-base for her self-described "smokey-folk" style, and was nominated for a newcomer award at the 2008 Junos, she made the leap and changed her style on her new album due out this month.

The desire to change her style came from the opportunity to perform with Symphony Nova Scotia in their pop series (which has also featured artists like Joel Plaskett and Buck 65).

"I think that kind of sifted my focus a little bit – having that opportunity – and I was drawn into the idea of producing a record the way they made all the classic records – with full, lush orchestration," said Barber of her opportunity to play with Symphony Nova Scotia.

"I ended up making a natural sort of move away from the folkier side of things and take these songs and fully realize them with lush strings and horn arrangements. I just decided to sort of make that my focus on this record and really kind of go all the way with it."

Her new album has a lounge singer aspect to it – the listener feels like they are transported back to the '40s in a smoky hotel bar. But more than just the era itself Barber wanted to recreate the feeling of romance in the music.

"I think I've always written songs that are pretty romantic and I think that romance has been lost in a lot of modern music so I look to the old classics. I just



Jill Barber's Chances was released October 14. She will appear at the Playhouse on October 26.

wanted to deliver it and bring that sound back to contemporary songs," said Barber.

But she didn't just want to cover some old classics, "because I'm a song-writer; instead of just covering some of my favourite old songs I wanted to challenge myself to write new songs that really have captured that old classic, romantic feel," said Barber, "I've found a niche in modern music which is to keep the spirit of the old romantic classics alive but to try to write new songs instead of just singing the old classics over again."

She had some help with writing the songs for this album. Ron Sexsmith collaborated with Barber for three songs on Chances. Sexsmith helped to write the title track Chances and One More Time, as well as singing on the track Old Flame.

"I've always really, really admired him as a song-writer; he's always been a bit of a song-writing hero of mine," said Barber of Sexsmith.

The two became friends while

touring together on the east and west coasts. The friendship eventually led to Barber asking Sexsmith to join her while she worked on her album at the Banff Centre – a learning center partially dedicated to the arts.

While working at the centre Barber worked tirelessly on her album, waking up every morning and writing songs with Sexsmith throughout the day.

"It was really intense but really satisfying," said Barber of the experience, "It can be tough to focus on the art in my day-to-day life so to get away from everything and to shut everything else out allowed me to focus and to get more into the artistic process. I tried to make the most of it and I ended up writing the majority of these songs during that time so I was well worth it."

The album's release will be followed by a tour by Barber. All of the locations were hand picked by her based on the places that she enjoys performing in the most.

"I'm just really looking forward

to getting into these performance rooms since I've got this perfect tour lined up so I'm looking forward to the tour as a whole," Barber said of the line-up.

"It's a beautiful theatre space. I got to actually the chance to perform there a couple times – once with Ron Sexsmith and once with Stuart McClean and the Vinyl Café. It's a great stage and a beautiful room," said Barber of the Fredericton Playhouse, one of the stops on the tour.

The Playhouse will actually be the opening show for her tour.

"It'll be the kick off and that'll be fun. It'll have the energy of a first show which is always unique and very exciting. It sounds great and feels great to be on that stage and perform in that room. I've had great experiences there and I can not wait to get back and do another show, said Barber.

"I'm really looking forward to getting back to Freddy Beach."

Jill Barber's album, Chances, was released October 14. Her show at the Fredericton Playhouse is October 26.

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