

edwin, egos & earth: I Mother Earth does The Barn

By KENT DRISCOLL

I Mother Earth is one of those bands that you must see to truly appreciate, and on February 19th, the students of UPEI were able to fully appreciate these young Toronto rockers. From beginning to end, IME put on a live performance that stands among the best shows to ever grace the decrepit walls of The Barn. Through their energetic stage performance, "rock boy" antics and solid performance, the crowd was changed from the typical "drink till you drop, let's play Black Knight" Barn crowd, to a seething mass that was obeying the every command of Edwin, the charismatic lead vocalist.

If you can characterise a band's music with one word, the word for I Mother Earth is rhythm. For the tour, the band added a rhythm percussionist, and when combined with the already rhythmic music of the four members of IME, the result was hypnotic. Rhythm layered over rhythm is the key to their music. These powerful beats moved the crowd to form the largest mosh pit in UPEI history, extending from stage to the sound board, filling the entire dance floor.

When opening act Glueleg left the stage, IME made an entrance in the true classic rock tradition. All lights were out, and the drums begin. The guitar joins, and the murmurs begin in the crowd. Flashes of light, and then a giant roar from the fans as they realise that the first song of the show was "One More Astronaut", IME's hit single from their smash album "Scenery and Fish". By starting out with the song that everyone in the building knew, IME grabbed the crowd, and made them theirs.

Their stage presence was reinforced by the actions of lead vocalist Edwin (one

word name, ie Cher, Madonna, Prince), who is at worst a ham, and at best, a showman. The immediate hormonal response from the women in the audience didn't hurt his showmanship either. The most common words heard in the Barn that were "isn't he hot?" One can only assume they weren't talking about the sub-tropical feel the Barn gets during main events. Edwin was slapping hands, talking to, and generally enjoying the crowd, and they certainly enjoyed him right back.

Edwin is full of cliches, but through his sincere delivery and stage presence, the crowd believed him. A perfect example is when he scaled the balcony and leaned over the crowd. While you may have seen Eddie Vedder do this in the video for "Even Flow", but did Eddie manage to climb a balcony, in bare feet, holding a microphone, lower himself into the crowd, and still manage not to miss a word in the song?

Edwin did.

His other large "rock star" gesture was to pick the spotlight up off of the stage, and shine it toward the crowd. While U2's Bono is famous for this move, Edwin tied it in nicely with IME's show. He

used a red light during their song "Raspberry." Sure it was obvious, but damn it, it worked.

Edwin remained sincere, even when saying the obligatory things heard at shows. Instead of asking the crowd to stop pushing, he simply commented, "You are killing your friends up here." However, that didn't completely stop the pushing, and a number of dehydrated fans had to be removed.

During the mandatory "gee, we're really happy to be... ah... where the hell are we?" section, Edwin again made the crowd roar. Feeling apparently as one with the audience, he recounted his tale of hiding in the bathroom at the Barn, and listening to people talk about the band. One comment he overheard was, "Why the hell are IME playing here?" His simple and true answer, "How can you call yourself a Canadian band when you haven't played PEI."

Aside from Edwin's actions, the band put on an amazing display of live jamming technique. When they jam, IME seems greater than the sum of their parts. Each is talented, but the way they weave their talents together makes for a unique musical



When not hiding in bathroom stalls, I Mother Earth enjoy long walks on the beach and catering to swooning females. photos J. Clow

experience.

Aside from their songs from "Dig" and "Scenery and Fish", they added large solos and percussion features, and even threw a few cover songs into the mix. They musically tipped their hats to Led Zeppelin, Santana, and The Doors, either through introductions to songs, or, as in the case of The Doors, they delivered a full version of "LA Woman".

Instrumentally, the high point of the night was when the lead guitar player joined the rhythm percussionist for a rhythm jam, which lasted at least ten minutes. Self indulgent, but again, damn it, it worked.

I Mother Earth is without a doubt one of Canada's best performance acts right now, and can only get better with time. IME: get 'em while they're hot.

