

# If You Think That Cheque is Big, Then You Should See My Pen

by Stephan MacLEOD

The House of Rock took on the home of light rock, Q104, and kicked its artificially whitened teeth down its throat. Despite sharing lingering hangovers and lack of sleep from the night before, Slowcoaster and Rock Ranger went head to head to head against each other and Halifax band, Inland, in the Rock of the Atlantic battle of bands sponsored by some beer company and the monolithic metro radio station, Q104.

First prize in this competition was a \$5000 shopping spree at Music Stop. Since neither Slowcoaster and Rock Ranger own their own gear, it was agreed upon by the group of best friends from Sydney that no matter who won, they would invest in a much-needed bass. The only obstacle to their plan was the involvement of Inland in the final showdown of this competition. Inland posed a considerable threat to the House of Rock since the event was sponsored by an adult contemporary rock radio station, and their watered-down music could easily pass for the corporate rock featured on Q104's playlist.

Despite having the homecourt advantage, Inland didn't stand a chance against the rowdy audience of Cape Bretoners that packed the Marquee to see the two bands from Sydney's fabled House of Rock. Their only hope was that the group of judges who were mostly over 35 would be on their side.

Slowcoaster started playing before the dorky radio personality could finish introducing them, and the crowd erupted into screams and hollers at a volume unheard of since the Cape Breton Oilers won the Calder Cup. The dancefloor was packed with Cape Breton girls grooving to Steve MacDougall's jangly funk ballads. There was a healthy dose of booty shaking throughout the performance.

After Slowcoaster's technically flawless set, Inland loaded the stage with a ridiculous amount of gear. Judging by the two Marshall stacks and pile of bass cabinets, it seemed unnecessary for this three-piece to win a shopping spree at a music store. But the more I thought about it, it would probably be funny if they used the \$5000 to buy nothing but guitar picks. Their bland set of phony smiles and rock cliches was pretty weak, but their drummer was extremely talented. The drummer's technical skills were admired by everyone I talked to in the audience, but overall the band received a tepid response.

When Inland cleared away their gear, Jay Smith from Rock Ranger plugged his guitar into a borrowed amp, and let a bent note ring out that sparked the insane enthusiasm of the Capers. The audience started screaming in a hysteria that grew progressively crazier and louder throughout Rock Ranger's set. Everyone chanted the band's name over and over again disrupting their introduction by the Q104 DJ. Feeding off the energy of the audience, the band blasted their ferocious riffs and led everyone in the biggest rock sing-a-long I've ever witnessed at the Marquee.



"Fuckin' Pepsi machine won't take my cheque. Steve, get my gun."

The audience's knowledge of the words to all the songs was a complete shock to the band. And the chants of "Rock Ranger" in between songs left the usually incoherent, Jay, almost speechless. The audience was still chanting their name long after they stopped playing.

When the judges arrived at a decision, and the Rock of the Atlantic organizers took the stage, the cheering for Rock Ranger grew even louder. The Rock Ranger chant turned into a House of Rock chant, and the organizers played up to the Cape Bretoners by mentioning Sydney and the House of Rock in between their inane congratulations of the sponsors.

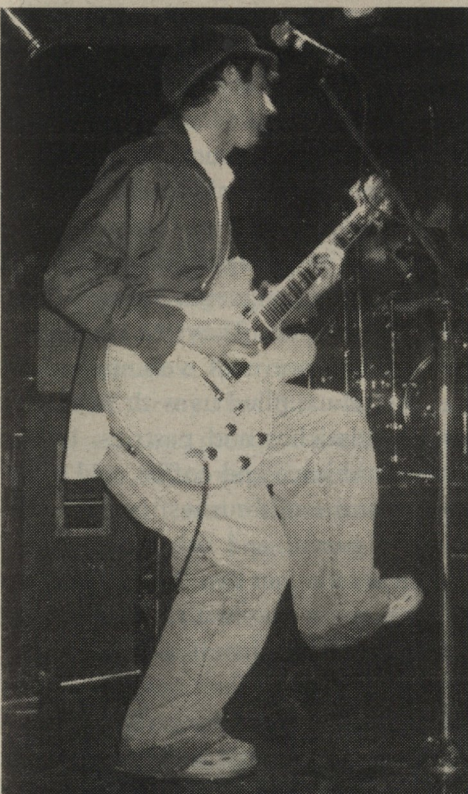
Slowcoaster were announced as the winners of the \$5000 gift certificate. Steve MacDougall walked out on stage carrying Rock Ranger's Jay Smith on his back while Mikey LeLievre from Slowcoaster slapped him on the arse. Slowcoaster drummer Devon Strang was notably absent from the presentation of the

giant cheque because he was kicked out during Rock Ranger's set for spraying beer all over Jay. Mikey and Steve led the audience in a massive Rock Ranger chant, then went outside to show Devon the cheque.

Despite only band being declared the winner of this competition, it was clearly a victory for the entire House of Rock. Slowcoaster got a giant cheque to buy a new bass with, and Rock Ranger transformed the Marquee into a rock concert worthy of the Halifax Metro Centre, or at least Centre 200.



I see you baby, shakin' that ass.



Steve MacDougall squishin' bugs.