

# up close and personal with the CHUCKY DANGER BAND

by aimee arsenault • copy editor / journalist wanna-be

There are early Saturdays, and there are early Saturdays when you wake up to discover that it really isn't so early and your tape recorder is from 1970. On this crisp September morning this wanna-be-journalist begins her trek to Walmart to find a tidy little silver one, and quickly escapes to campus in time to meet PEI's latest sound sensation, the Chucky Danger Band (separately known as Dave MacDonald, Colin Buchanan and brothers Rob and John MacPhee) to talk about their new CD, "Two Brothers, Two Majors and a Minor." It's an adventure which takes place near the band's rehearsal space in the UPEI music department student lounge. The art in there is really cool! But even cooler is John's new (to him) leather jacket he slips into just before the interview.

**Rob:** We're not being videotaped.

**John:** I know, just getting into character.

*How did it feel to do a live album for your first attempt at recording?*

**John:** I really liked the idea, I thought we could capture a lot more energy in a live recording.

**Rob:** Plus it was a hell of a lot cheaper.

*Where did the name "Chucky Danger" come from?*

**Dave:** a buddy of mine, Miles, wanted to name his first son Chucky Danger, and we thought it was a catchy name. Me and Colin sort of pooled our resources on that one.

*I heard that you hit #1 on Magic 93's Top 9 at 9 quite a few nights over the past week or so – how does it feel to have won over PEI's listeners in such a short time?*

**Dave:** I think it feels good, I mean I feel like we've just sort of scratched the surface of where we're headed. Living Forward, I think is a great tune, but what I'm really excited for is our next radio single, which will be Sweet Symphony. We're going to be getting a string section... it'll sound like an orchestra. A lot more production going into this one, maybe a horn section, it's gonna be one to remember I think.

**John:** Yeah, we're really excited about Living Forward now, it's only been on the radio about a week so most people probably haven't even heard the song yet, and we recognize that it can probably go a lot farther, and we're going to push that.

**Rob:** And it isn't a song that really represents us fully. It's a very small, small part of us.

**Dave:** It's only one song, right? And we're a multi-dimensional band – Ola is Spanish, we have a French song...

(Phone rings, Colin picks it up... discussion ensues about squash, Summerside venues and the fact that the band has recently sent their song off to a major Australian label)

*So you guys are obviously planning on moving on to bigger and crazier things...*

**Dave:** This winter we're planning on doing a bit of a maritime tour, hit up the ECMAs...

**John:** We've got a real push from Island musicians to do the rock showcase and the rising star showcase – ECMA adjudicators from the Island, so that's a good sign for us.

**Dave:** We're also planning on going down and touring Moncton, Fredericton, Halifax, a few places that aren't too far off for now, and then see where we go from there. I mean, I think good inspiration for a Canadian band would be the Barenaked Ladies, who apparently in order to break into the American market just toured and toured, kept hitting the same

cities and did all the media they could... And now everybody knows who the Barenaked Ladies are, and not just from Million Dollars.

*Dave, I heard you just found out you'll be one of the soloists for the UPEI wind symphony...*

**Dave:** Yeah, me and Krista (Carruthers) are gonna be the soloists, which I think will be cool... I love drumming, and I also love percussion... Marimba, xylophone, vibraphone, I'm not sure what he's going to throw at me but I'm kinda pumped for whatever.

*Do you think you'll be able to pull any of that kind of percussion into your music with these guys?*

**Dave:** I especially hope to do that in our next studio album. We just have to find a venue that fits. I think with Sweet Symphony what we need first is a string section and a brass section, and I think that will pull that together.

*Who does all the writing?*

**John:** We do a bit of collaboration, we're getting into more collaboration.

**Rob:** Mostly what me, Colin and Dave have done to John's music is try to improve it in any way we could, trying to innovate on it a little, and I think we've done that. I don't know what Colin and Dave are planning but I personally am going to move into the writing aspect...

**John:** Yeah, so most of the songs on the CD now I wrote.

**Colin:** In about a year's time we'll all be writing.

*Musical influences?*

**John:** Wait, hold on, no, don't answer... where's my wallet, I have it written down...

**Dave:** Cher... (laughs) The guardian mis-quoted me as saying one of my biggest influences personally was Cher. One of my drumbeats came from one Cher song...

**Rob:** How embarrassing. I was reading it and I was like whoa, I'm pretty sure Dave didn't say that...

**John:** The quotes all kinda got changed around just a little... One thing Colin said while we were talking about our drive to give a thousand dollars to the cancer society – Colin was like 'all of us have at one time in our lives have been touched by a cancer patient.' All I could think of was somebody holding a cancer patient and touching Colin with him. So we're trying to stifle laughter, it was a weird mental image... So she kinda took the quote... After you said it you were like ahh, that's not what I meant at all...

**Colin:** She changed it though.

**Dave:** Of course we were talking about being touched emotionally, which we all have been.

*Nice segway... Tell me about your plans for donating to the cancer society.*

**Dave:** Basically we're striving to give cancer research on PEI \$1000. Our initial plan was to give them 10%, but we haven't exactly made that much yet. We've done okay, we've raised as much as could for them and we're happy with that, but we're going to have a big charity concert sometime coming up, possibly at the Mack.

**John:** I'm just looking forward to that day when we can hand them a big cheque with \$1000 written on it.

*You mean like one of those really big cheques?*

**John:** It'll be the biggest cheque you've ever seen. You won't even see us behind it, we'll be like peering around the side. The headline will read "Chucky Danger Band donates HUGE cheque."

*So yeah, we kinda skipped over a question...*

**John:** I took all my cards out and then put them back... Yeah, influences. Collectively, Dave Matthews, Coldplay, Fleetwood Mac, Blondie, James Brown.

**Rob:** I think we dropped Blondie for the Police.

**John:** Right, that's right we did.

**Rob:** I think the Police are definitely a bit of an influence.

**Colin:** For me anyway, and Dave.

**Rob:** And maybe not so much a musical influence as the way they held their band together. I just love the story of the Police. They held onto that huge fire – well, you know, not literally fire, but like 5 years after they started they were still at the peak of their success.

**John:** I really respect Sting. I don't really know his music, but he's making it, and I really respect what he's done... (laughter) It's a Zoolander quote.

(Lots more laughing...)

*Worst on-stage moments?*

**Colin:** I've got one...

**John:** Wait, I know what you're going to say, and is there a worse one?

**Colin:** We don't have to come with a collective one, I just want to explain this one...

**John:** Is it the guitar one?

**Colin:** Let me tell it! While we were recording our live performance, one of my cords sort of cut out while I was playing by myself – it was really bad, we really had to cut and paste that song.

**Rob:** We ended up just dropping it off the CD completely.

**Colin:** Yeah, I didn't know what to do, I knew my guitar had cut out but I just kept on playing. It was like 'oh God, this is Hell'...

**Dave:** What else? Were there any times where stuff fell over, or...

All together: Ohhh! The parade!

**Rob:** For the parade we had a truck and a hay wagon, and we had stopped at one point and my brother was in the truck – he wasn't driving, he was just in it, and there were like 5 people in the truck and he was squished right over by the driver, and he turns around to look at us and he moves his foot and steps right on the gas, floors it, speaker falls over, Debbie Bradbury was there on the float, she falls over... Luckily all of us were standing there with our feet far apart...

**Dave:** My tom fell off... The truck kept moving cause they didn't think anything actually fell, and I had to yell and scream at them to stop cause it was about to be crushed by one of those big trailers... Anyway, we got it.

**John:** Yeah, and Buffy Andrews was holding a microphone stand and then like completely went off the back...

**Colin:** Yeah, it was bad.

**Rob:** That almost ruined the whole thing. Not that there wasn't anything but that which could have ruined it – it was absolute hell, so hot, so tiring... 2 and a half hours straight, playing the same songs, in these really thick furry animal costumes...

*Okay stop, I have to ask, why animal costumes?*

**Rob:** It was John's idea.

**John:** It was going to become a small theme, at least for this album. We were going to make the cover all of us in animal costumes, but that shot of Colin falling was priceless.

*Unfortunately my tape ended here and I didn't realize it until I got home. So when you see the Chucky Danger guys in the street, ask them about their biggest rock-star moments. They had some interesting things to say about being recognized while semi-conscious on the front step of a locked apartment, buying pepsi for kids while in business-casual attire, etc. Also, if you see John or Rob, ask them to sing you the "MacPhee's Squares" song. And suggest that they include it in their studio recording. With marimba.*

For CDs, merchandise and information about the Chucky Danger Band, visit their website at [www.chuckydanger.com](http://www.chuckydanger.com). And be sure to check out their performance at the Wave this Thursday, Sept 30!