

# Matt Mays Nation, By Storm

by Alec O'Hanley • Arts & Entertainment Editor

Things have been hectic for Matt Mays and El Torpedo. Fresh off a cross-country tour with Sam Roberts, the rocker snagged an ECMA award along with reams of critical praise. I talked with Matt while he was driving on some New Brunswick road, vainly trying to stay warm and keep his cell phone from breaking up.

**Cadre:** How often do you write songs?

**Matt Mays:** I can write five in one day, or sometimes I'll go two months without writing them. It's very sporadic with me.

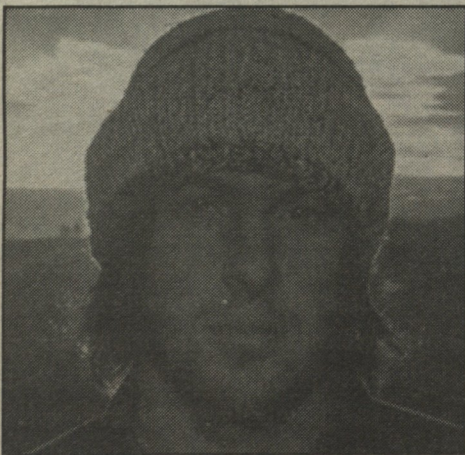
**Cadre:** How did the idea of enlisting your dad for the album art come about?

**Matt:** I'm a fan of his work. It's cool to team up with my dad to do an album. He did album covers in the seventies and eighties, nobody really that famous, but he was always into doing poster art for a lot of cool acts that came to him looking for art.

**Cadre:** What was the tour with Sam Roberts like?

**Matt:** It was awesome - a really good time. Really good crowds. Sam and the boys are some of the best guys we've ever met, both of the bands get along so well. It was a real pleasure and a good thing to be a part of.

Matt Mays gazes wistfully



**Cadre:** Did you find those guys rubbed off on you - say, in terms of writing?

**Matt:** Not so much in writing. I find I just do my own thing, but as far as performance goes, they've played a lot of shows this year - well, their whole lives really, they're experienced players; so yeah, we definitely got a lot out of watching them play. As far as comedy, both bands have their own sense of humour that we get a kick out of. We get a lot of funny things out of them and they get a lot of funny things out of us.

**Cadre:** Any plans for a future tour with those guys?

**Matt:** I would imagine, yeah. We've become pretty good friends, so it's one of those things if the time is right then I'm sure it'll happen again.

**Cadre:** What do you think has been the biggest boost for the band so far?

**Matt:** I would say probably getting to tour Canada with a great band like those guys, getting to play in front of that many people every night really helps us out. We're going back out west in a week and a half and we'll be able to get a few people out now that we've been able to do that.

**Cadre:** So this year you won best new artist at the ECMAs in St. John's. Word has it that at last year's ECMAs you and Eyes for Telescopes got kicked out of the Sennheiser party for stealing a punch bowl of beer and marching around a hotel at 5am screaming "we're here, we're queer, we're not going away!" Which year was more fun?

**Matt:** I'm not gonna lie, I'd say as far as shenanigans go, we got into a lot more shenanigans in Halifax than we did in St. John's. I mean, it wasn't for lack of trying but it seemed to get pulled off a little more successfully in Halifax.

**Cadre:** I think it's on tape too...

**Matt:** (laughing) I guess I really can't deny those shenanigans then.

**Cadre:** Do you still live in Halifax?

**Matt:** I live in Dartmouth.

**Cadre:** My bad. Do you find there has been any pressure for the band to relocate?

**Matt:** Not really no, only from the weather (laughing). Other than that, we're perfectly fine with living in Halifax. I think as long as you're willing to tour and not wanting to be home all the time then you can live anywhere you want. I truly believe that.

**Cadre:** Your song "City of Lakes" is set in Dartmouth. Was there a reason why you decided to film the video for it in Ontario?

**Matt:** Budget-wise, where we filmed it was only a couple of hours north of Toronto and if we had have flown the whole crew to Halifax we would have had to cut a lot of the budget in the lighting and cameras. I'd rather go for a better quality video somewhere that looks exactly like Dartmouth than to have a low budget video in Dartmouth itself.

**Cadre:** What do you like about surfing?

**Matt:** It's just so much different from anything else I've done before. It's just one of those things that is a pretty awesome concept. It's really nice to be out there and you don't need to pay to do it.

**Cadre:** How did both the joining and parting with the Guthries come about?

**Matt:** I met Dale from the Guthries at a party and we ended up having the same exact musical tastes. He was in the band; the Guthries were together at the time. So I got to see them and I thought they were really great, I was into what they were doing and I really wanted to be in the band, so I ended up just jamming with them and hanging out a lot it was six months after that - actually, maybe three or four months.

They asked me to play a few songs with them it just built and built, we grew together, started touring and

everything and then I started my solo record because I had a lot of songs I wanted to get on an album. I started giving that my undivided attention and the Guthries were sort of second to the album I was working on. It sort of naturally happened. I was spending most of my time selling tickets. With the Guthries there were four songwriters, so there were only three songs per person. It got a little tense sometimes.

**Cadre:** What have you been listening to lately?

**Matt:** Lately, I've been listening to a lot of Warren Zevon... we listen to just about everything. We listened to the Hellcopters all day today, yeah, you name it. Really digging [Joel] Plaskett's new record. Yeah, tons of stuff, I don't even know where to start.

I like a lot of older music like the Beatles, and when it comes to new music I like a lot of hip hop more than I do rock or whatever. I mean there are a lot of cool bands out there - I really like that new Jet record. I'm into Neil Young, Dylan and the band, Jackson Brown. I really like the early 70's stuff.

\*Cell phone cuts out\*

**Cadre:** Hello?

**Matt:** ...

**Cadre:** Crap.

Matt Mays and El Torpedo are playing the Wave with Two Hours Traffic Friday, March 13.

The reporter is indebted to Stephan MacLeod and Erin McGuire for help with this interview.