

East Coast's top talent speak their mind

Cara Heath sat down with Nova Scotia's Wintersleep to get their opinion on their on-going success

By Cara Heath

CH: What bands or events really inspired you to start playing music?

WS: Eric's Trip, The Motes, North of America, Melvins, Kittens, Sonic Youth, Burnt Black, Yarmouth, Stellarton.

CH: Tony Doogan has worked with such bands as Mogwai, and has also produced one of my favorite records, The Life Pursuit by Belle & Sebastian. What was it like working with him and what do you think he brought to the process as producer?

WS: Tony was really wonderful to work with. Really made us work in the studio and really had big ideas for the record. Inspired us to work very hard and just a really tasteful pair of ears. It was a little overwhelming to be working with him in the first place. I guess that pressure really made us work harder. We felt really lucky. I still feel so lucky to have had the chance to work with him. I really feel that this record is exactly what it should have been which, there is no better feeling as a musician.

CH: There's the old cliché where a band says their latest

album is more "mature," but Welcome To The Night Sky definitely has that feel, and I'm wondering, what your thoughts are on that?

WS: I guess I wouldn't say its more mature on a songwriting level. A different batch of songs with different needs I guess. I think we just had the right batch of songs and the right producer in Tony and great confidence as a band. We were on the road for 2 years before recording this record so we just really came prepared to do it.

CH: With the departure of Jud (former bass player) and the addition of Mike Bigelow (bass) and Jon Samuel (keyboards), how has the band's dynamic changed?

WS: Mike and Jon are fabulous players and amazing, caring, beautiful people. It's nice to have such a great group of people around all the time. I can't think of a better way to spend my time. We're all just really happy to be doing this together. I feel as though we've reached a new level as a band and group of friends over the past few years and it just feels like everything is running smoothly and we're just excited to be doing this. Tight ship. Feeling great!

CH: Judging by videos I've seen on the internet, some of the songs on the new album have been around for a while and sounded quite different, so I'm wondering how you arrived on the versions that make it on the album, and how songs tend to evolve within the band.

WS: We like to mess around with original concepts as much as possible. We like the idea of performing live and so we use that as our basis for treating the songs.. Some times though you can get carried away and they way you d something live may not best suit the dynamics of the "album as a whole" so it is important to be able to strip down and change it up when need be. Tony again was so helpful in this department.

CH: As one of the most well known bands from the maritime region, what are your thoughts on the current scene here and why have you felt it's important to stay such a large part of it?

WS: The people in Nova Scotia (the East Coast) really appreciate music in a very unique way. I think it is just a very supportive base. It's where we come from and they let us know in a big messy way. I love it.

CH: Are there any bands

you've played with that stand out in your mind as being really great experiences, and are there any bands you really want to play with?

WS: Wooden Stars, Tragically Hip. I feel like this past year we really got to witness some of the greats and it's been humbling and mind blowing and what more can I say. Dog Day and Land of Talk are the two bands I really want to tour with. Constantines. Basia Bulat is fantastic. We can't wait to see her play live.

CH: Similarly, are there any shows or places you've played that really stand out, or places you'd really like to play?

WS: Every place has its charms.. Too hard to say. Thunder Bay was a real eye opener last week. That was I guess the most surprising show for me this tour.

CH: As someone who has never seen you live, but is a fan of your music, what should people expect at one of your shows?

WS: We have a pretty simple mission statement. We are a rock band with a batch of songs that we love to play. We have the best rythm section in Canada. Tim D'Eon will be there. In P.E.I. we will play all of the songs from our newest record. Plus, we're sexy.

Beowulf: A Cold and Distant Experience

By Adam W. Morrison

Based on the centuries old Anglo-Saxon poem of the same name, Beowulf is told in three distinct acts. The year is 700 A.D. in the Kingdom of Denmark, and a celebration at a Mead Hall is cut short when a troll named Grendel (Crispin Glover) shows up and slaughters quite a few people. The King, Hrothgar (Anthony Hopkins) offers a lavish reward for who slays Grendel. For those wondering what mead is, it is a drink sometimes known as honey wine.

Answering the call is Beowulf (Ray Winstone), one of those warriors who know no fear. Upon his arrival, Beowulf boasts of past triumphs like his fighting of the sea monsters while during a swimming race. The night he arrives, Beowulf and his men wait in the Mead Hall for Grendel arrive. Beowulf, as he explains to the Queen (Robin Wright Penn), fights in the nude because Grendel has no armor. This means we get some Austin Powers style nudity, i.e. strategically placed objects to prevent the display of the male member. I thought this was pretty funny. You can show all the violence you want in a movie, but people draw the



line at sex and nudity. Well, Grendel arrives and Beowulf takes him down a peg. Grendel is a marvel of design, looking like and acting an abused child. I hope don't the spoil the movie for anyone to say Beowulf does kill Grendel.

With that troll out of the way, happy times should be ahead, but Grendel's mother is none too happy about her boy dying. Can you blame her?

Beowulf heads into her lair and is confronted by (I'm quoting here) a "water demon" who has the beauty of Angelina Jolie. When she rises out of the water, she's completely nude but her naught bits are covered. She's damnably seductive, hiding her true nature. Beowulf

returns to the Kingdom, claiming he has killed her. During this time, Hrothgar announces, upon his death, Beowulf will become king.

The film now jumps about 50 years, and Beowulf is king. Obviously much older, he's more of a resigned person than the vigorous self seen many years earlier. The relationship with his queen (still Wright Penn) is distant, and a reminder from the past comes back to haunt him in a big way.

When I first heard of this film, I assumed it be would be live-action. This is director Robert Zemeckis's second feature to utilize 3-D CGI animation, or whatever they call it, is interesting but not wholly successful. The prob-

lem lies within the use of this style of animation. Many scenes border on completely realistic, so why not just use live-action? This hybrid of animation and live-action, done through motion-capture technology, left me cold and unattached. But it seems this movie would have been impossible without the CGI animation. Beowulf, as he appears onscreen, has a physique fit for a Spartan. Winstone, who plays Beowulf, is far from that. That's not to say he doesn't deliver a good performance. His Beowulf is one full of life. The best moment occurs when fighting Grendel: "I am the ripper, the terror, the slasher. I am the teeth in the darkness! The talons in the night! My name is strength! And lust! And power! I am Beowulf!"

John Malkovich is also quite good as Unferth, loyal servant to the King. Also, as Beowulf's long-time friend and warrior in battle, Brendan Gleeson adds another notch to his increasingly impressive resume. He's one of those actors who are often better than his material.

This film is also being presented in 3-D, and there are many moments throughout you can tell were intended for that effect.

Rating: **1/2 (out of ****)