

# New Seen Fest: Why No, I Don't Think You Care

by Jonah CAMPBELL

New Seen Fest is a two-night series of concerts that takes place in Halifax, NS on a somewhat sporadic basis, which serves to showcase local independent music of primarily the punk/hardcore (although extending quite liberally to encompass new wave, electronica, emo-core and indie rock) persuasion. The second installation of this event was held over the 4th and 5th of January, 2002, but for the life of me, I can't remember when the last one was. Some time ago in any case, as the Fest occurs basically whenever someone or other determines that the makeup of the local music scene has shifted sufficiently to merit such a showcase. Or at least this is my understanding of how it's supposed to work.

In reality, this year New Seen Fest featured, along with a number of Halifax bands, a band from PEI, one from Moncton, and, curiously enough, one from Boston, MA. Go figure. The inclusion of the PEI band I can understand, as within the punk/hardcore scene there is considerable crossover and interaction between the PEI and Halifax scenes, and furthermore, both cities fall under the umbrella of the 902 scene (and more importantly, I am in this band, so I tend to view our inclusion in the Fest rather favourably). Moncton? Sure, whatever, I guess it's about time New Brunswick stopped getting shat on by the rest of the Maritimes (despite deserving it most of the time). But Boston? While not exactly keeping with the theme of local talent, nobody really gave a shit, and as I understand it, their presence was the result of some Halifax kids who had been in MA the week before simply inviting them up for the show.

The bill for the first night consisted of Lance Bownes and the Residence (aka Les Dance), Eyes To The Sky, A/V, Three Fine Days, and yours truly, Tastes Like Burning (still kicking it with the old name despite a somewhat misinformed article in the Buzz by some shiftless clod).

Lance Bownes and the



**Three Fine Days: Yep, this sure is that band.**

Residence, despite being touted as an 80's style New Wave band, sounded all the world to me more like a modern pop band backed up by cheesy keyboards. Now granted, I only caught the first few songs of their set (as I had to risk life and limb attempting to transport an amp someone had loaned to us for the show (speaking thereof, madd props go out to Graham and Maco for all their help)) so perhaps I didn't give them enough of a chance, but I was later informed that all I missed was some lame, contrived-seeming stage antics (dancing, cross-dressing, and humping the stage) by their lead singer against a backdrop of thoroughly disinterested-looking, listless bandmates. In the final estimation, people didn't seem quite sure whether the over-the-top pseudo-androgynous singer/mundane bandmate combination was meant to evoke the essence of 80's new wave band imagery, or whether it simply amounted to more terribleness. Oh, and I guess there were fake British accents afoot as well. I'm glad I missed that, if not so much the opportunity to develop a well-informed opinion of the band itself.

Next up was Eyes To the Sky, who played some pretty decent emo/screamo-core type stuff that constantly shifted between melodic prettiness with sung vocals to some pretty well-carried out screaming intensity. The band seemed to get pretty into it, although one got the sense that things were a still a little rough around the edges and that their set will most likely get a little more exciting as time

goes on. In any case, despite my general distaste for the now quite typical practice of alternated (wussy) singing and screaming in bands of this nature, the screaming really was quite good, especially when the backup vocals came in and one was treated to three layers of vocal excoriation. Thumbs up.

In what might strike some as an unlikely progression, Eyes To the Sky were followed by A/V, Halifax's one-man (previously two-man) New Wave-cum-electronica dancing sex machine, also known as Philip Clarke (also known as Spinoza when he has a Bass instead of keyboards). Starting off the set with a round of pirate jokes, A/V got the crowd moving with what can really only be described (by an electronic music layman such as myself) as eminently danceable, catchy, keyboard-heavy, new wave-influenced, aggressive house something, something. Oh, and what a description! During the course of his set, Phil spiced things up by attempting to entice audience members into being duct-taped to AI, the "A/V gogo dancer," which eventually escalated into the taping together of a Phil, AI, and a sizable chunk of the audience, into an unruly, badly-dancing mass. In the ultimate expression of what might arguably be deemed the most entertaining stage personality in Halifax, Phil ended his set by eating a sandwich during the last song. Multi-talented, I'm tellin' ya.

Next up was Three Fine Days, playing their first show since the loss of their old vocalist, Oke, and the reintroduction of their original drummer. With their new vocalist has come a transition to emo-pop, leaning away from the intermittent screaming employed in the past which had more or less been responsible for their status as an emo-hardcore band. Incidentally, Mark, their new singer is not even from Halifax, and in fact lives in PEI and until recently played drums for the now deceased metalcore band Hands Held Open. All in all they played a decent set, although I don't



**Flesh Made to Suffer: Ummm ... Fucking rock?**

really have much use for the style of music itself, but it was pretty competently played. Their singer managed to hold his own, and although he revealed to me that he actually only had lyrics ready for two of their songs, it really wasn't too painfully obvious. Either that, or I just wasn't paying close enough attention..

Tastes Like Burning closed the show, and while I'm not too comfortable describing/reviewing my own performance, I think we played well enough, and people seemed to get pretty into us, which was great. Our performance had the added feature of foam darts flying around the stage almost incessantly, owing to our decision to pass out a number of bubblegum-filled nerf dart guns before the set, and if I wasn't so lazy I could probably make some claims to that enhancing the interactivity of the show and corroding the audience/performer distinction, but we all know that'd be pretty much bullshit. I mean, they were nerf guns for crap's sake.

Also, much to my surprise, the relatively small number of lyric sheets I brought to hand out at the show were quickly snatched up, and people even approached me afterwards to inquire about getting copies, suggesting that perhaps my previously unrelenting decial of the Halifax hardcore scene as being deplorably apathetic and apolitical might have been a little harshly premature. Indeed, I am happy to be proven wrong, if such is the case.

On the second night of New Seen Fest, the lineup didn't excite me