

Seat Sale: On Rockin' the T-Dot

By Catherine SWEET

For my Reading Week, I flew to Toronto. (And yes, I, too have to stop myself from calling it Spring Break, but unless you can comfortably wear sandals and shorts, I'm sorry, it's not Spring Break.) I've applied for Universities in southern Ontario, so I thought I'd go and visit a couple of friends and look at schools. Of course, I was having too much fun with my friends and only saw one; Wilfrid Laurier University, my number one choice. The rest of the time I spent clinging to my friends in the face of the big city.

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I must admit, I did feel like a bit of a hayseed. Driving towards my friend's apartment, I was astounded by the mass of cookie-cutter suburbia that just wouldn't stop. It went on and on, like a Stratford on steroids. That's the point when, a mere half-hour into my arrival in Toronto, I started to think longingly for home. I felt sorry for those houses and the people that lived in them. They commuted for hours to strut down the cold pavement, ignoring cold panhandlers and eating their cold leftovers from last night's meal. Um, which was cold.

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ing metropolitan life started to fade away. It started to resemble more of a purgatory. Somewhere you'd have to pay penance for a while before living somewhere you truly wanted to be.

One part of Toronto that I had a hard time with was the transit system. I didn't know where things were located above ground, so the subway was beguiling, and the above-ground transit ran in relation to compass points, but I had no idea where North and South were, so that was no great help.

The transit system sold no weekly passes, so I was forced to buy tokens. The tokens are \$2.25 each and the exact size as dimes, but without notched edges. Needless to say, it was very important to keep the tokens and your dimes separate because if you gave a cashier a token by mistake, they're not going to say anything you're out \$2.15.

The buses and streetcars criss-cross the city every ten minutes. I liked the streetcars. They have an air of nostalgia about them. They can't be hidden in a garage like the buses, as if

they didn't even exist. Their wires are like an overhead cage, and the rails scar the streets, both connected by the kitsch trolley.

Best of all, I liked the subway. I preferred to travel by streetcar, but I liked the subway for different reasons. It had its own life force. As you walk down the stairs from the streets, a warm and constant breeze pushes back at you. It smells of exhaust and dust and people.

Past the turnstiles, there's a sparse platform that you wait on. I don't really wait for the train, but for its forerunners. A rumble. A rustle of debris. Lights in the tunnel. When the train itself screams to the platform at an impossible speed, a great gust of wind hits you and momentarily ties knots in your hair.

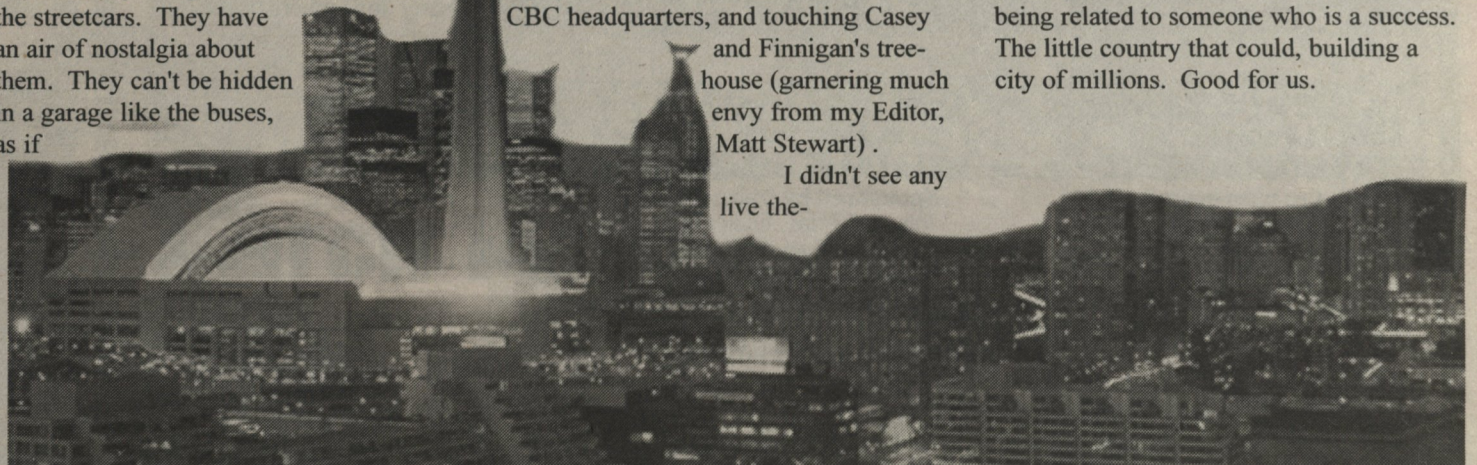
I saw Much Music, Bradford How and Rick the Temp. Other highlights were me spending two week's pay on one skirt at Club Monaco (oh my god...), making eye contact with Sook-yin Lee at the CBC headquarters, and touching Casey and Finnigan's treehouse (garnering much envy from my Editor, Matt Stewart).

I didn't see any live the-

atre (I can probably thank my Club Monaco skirt for that budget decision), but I saw "The Pianist," in which I broke all previous personal records for crying in a movie. Usually I might silently weep and sniffle, but this blew tepid melancholy out of the water.

I was racked with heaving sobs and felt like I was going to have to walk out because I was going to throw up. My friends didn't know what the hell to do, and I don't blame them. I settled down after the second hour, but then continued in my tried-and-true silent weeping mode. Needless to say, this was an excellent film that definitely deserved the "Best Picture" Oscar nod.

Toronto is undeniably a very Canadian city. It's huge, and ultra-diverse (I met people from Jamaica, Ethiopia, Lebanon and India), and dirty and scary, just like other big cities, but there's a humility that I love. It's fast-paced, but inviting. I was... proud of it. It felt like being related to someone who is a success. The little country that could, building a city of millions. Good for us.



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