

ADVICE FROM AN ISLAND ROCK STAR

HOW TO WIN BIG AT VIVA LAS BETHLEHEM*

BY TODD MACLEAN

So, after one of our sets the other night, a fan comes up to me and is all like, "Hey, great set, man," as I politely smiled and nodded, immediately glancing around the bar for other, cooler people to talk to. But before I could leave, the guy again speaks to me and says, "Yeah, I decided to come here tonight after all, even though I was thinking of going down to that new casino in town, but I opted not to, 'cause I probably woulda lost all my money," he snickered.

Searching for an appropriate rock phrase to conclude the wearisome banter, I finally went with, "Well, it's money for nothin' and the chicks for free."

But as I patted him on the back, and attempted to walk past him to talk to some groupies, he stops me again, and was like, "Well, hey man, I was just wondering, since you've probably been to this place before, or maybe even played a show there, would you be able to give me some tips on how to win big at the casino?"

Flattered by his compliments on my well-known gambling expertise, yet clueless, for I had never actually been to this apparent Island casino before, I just simply said, "Well, man, you've uh, gotta know when to fold 'em and know how he sold 'em."

"...Uh, that's 'know when to hold 'em and know how to fold 'em,'" he replied with a frown.

To this, I simply pointed to my pink tie-dyed t-shirt that I was wearing, as if to say, "Hello? Idiot? I'm a rocker, not Waylon Jennings," and left the guy standing there with his thumb up his ass.

However, just last night I actually had the pleasure of attending this ingenious temporary Island casino in town, or "Viva Las Bethlehem" as they've named it, and I had such a great time that they kept me there all night long. So now I'd actually like to give a reply to the question that this wonderful fan asked of me, which is, "How do I win big at the new Charlottetown casino?"

Well, first of all, for any of you who are unaware of the new temporary casino's location, it is set up right in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, on Grafton Street in town. Don't worry, you certainly will not miss it, as its elaborate light display will attract even the most penniless of Christmas gamblers in the Charlottetown area this holiday season. But, of course, the casino will only be up from November 20 to about the middle of January, so be sure to get your gambling in before it's too late.

Once you enter the casino, you will be immediately baffled by the sheer brightness of the space—not just a physical brightness, but an overwhelming spiritual, glowing presence that enchants and enlightens all gamblers in Viva Las Bethlehem. Enjoy this, in all its glory. But do not let this distract you from your task; remember: you are here to win big.

Now, the innkeeper's the guy who gives you the gold. And no, I'm not using gold as a metaphor here, you do actually gamble with gold, along with silver, and other precious jewels and elements. (And yes, frankincense and myrrh are included here.) So you exchange your money with the innkeeper for these gambling tokens. But for God's sake be nice to this guy. He turned away Joseph and Mary, and he'll sure as hell turn you away, by God.

As you head into the casino with your gambling funds, remember: a gold coin is not in any way equal to a gold loonie. So be careful. And buddy, like any night on the town, you gotta have at least enough money left by the end of it to go to the Mega Zone for a slice.

The shepherds run the craps tables. Don't let their shy demeanour fool you, though. I caught them a couple of times rigging the wheel when I was playing, and they almost gypped me outta all my rubies.

Joseph is all over the black jack table. He runs it like nobody's business. You gotta be fast with the "hit me's" and "sticks" or he'll kick your ass out faster than Jesus healing a

*Name courtesy of A. Gallant