

Choice Cuts

Reviews of Everything

Album: *Songs I Hate (And Other People Moments)*

Artist: Sixtoo

Label: Anticon

Songs I Hate (And Other People Moments) contains no shout-outs, big hooks, mindless thug posturing, bitches and no bling, bling. On this album, Halifax's Sixtoo's re-imagining of hip-hop as hyper-intelligent poetry makes average rappers seem like sub-literate mumblerers. The one problem with *Songs I Hate* is that on many tracks Sixtoo is simply trying to do too much. The overwhelming number of words and images that Sixtoo spits are so tightly packed within each song that, even after repeated listening, trying to decipher more than a general message or story is extremely difficult. *Songs I Hate* is littered with references to the difficulty of communication, leading the listener to believe that Sixtoo understands that translating his one liners ("If I was a killer, I would simply buy the liberty bell and sell the crack.") and personal complexities ("I play dice with my soul every time I walk down the street.") into a manageable whole is not a simple task. If Sixtoo does find a way to focus his considerable skills, it is hard to imagine an MC who would be able to match him.

-Matthew DORRELL

Album: *Hot Shots II*

Artist: The Beta Band

Label: Astralwerks

The subtle placement of beats and samples is the defining characteristic of good trip hop. The Beta Band take trip hop and grind it into an organic pulp of pop, soul, and ambient grooves. This is not an album that will catch your ear right away: It takes patience, and multiple listens before you will fully appreciate the seemingly sloppy arrangements and mash of

styles. But eventually the charm and fun of this Scottish group will take over your CD player.

-Stephan MACLEOD

Album: *Complete Discography*

Artist: Man Afraid

Label: Half Mast Records

This is the first time Man Afraid has been available on CD. Man Afraid is (or was) one of the most amazing and powerful bands to come out of the punk hardcore scene. They play driving, catchy, and occasionally melodic hardcore punk with yelled but decipherable vocals. What really blows me away is the quality of their lyrics, which for the most part address the horrible ideological sham which is the U.S. Military. Unlike most punk bands who wrestle with this topic, Man Afraid writes from personal experience, their singer having spent time himself in the army, during the Gulf War. The result is 14 songs of profoundly emotional, haunting, and inspiring rage, angst, and criticism, directed towards society and the state, with an eloquence and sophistication not often encountered within punk music. You may be asking yourself "If this was such a great band, then why does their entire discography clock in at under an hour?" Sadly, before the band could produce much material or achieve very widespread recognition, their singer committed suicide, so uh, that was the end of that. Get this. Somehow. Borrow it (from me, even). Read it. Now. "We're the proud heirs to a thousand Mai Lai massacres and Wounded Knees. I couldn't count the dead, I wouldn't even want to. Recoiling at the thought of blood we wash our hands with as the patriots salute that fucking flag."

- (All This) *In Defense of Blood and Land.*

-Jonah CAMPBELL

Show: Bloomfield House Basement Show

Location: The Basement of Bloomfield House, Halifax, NS

The way to the basement was down slightly treacherous stairs in near darkness. Sixtoo identified the smell as cat-piss, but it was also the smell of insulation, earth, bare-bulb lamplight, and soon enough, sweat. The basement was dim and hot, like the girls you liked in high school. Unlike those girls it was also small and squat. If your parents are doctors or lawyers, there are bathrooms in their houses larger than this room. The ceiling, which is the underside of a floor first and a ceiling second, was six feet at its highest point, four at the lowest. It was crisscrossed with rafters, support beams, strings of tiny Christmas lights, wires and pipes.

I smashed my head hard into a metal pipe and thereafter decided to express my enthusiasm with less mobility. The wiser Sixtoo moved awkwardly and with care, his name honestly expressing his height, which

surpassed that of the ceiling. He switched from dj to poet, his live performance easily as intense as the recorded equivalent – perhaps much more so because one had the benefit of seeing brilliant words emerge from so unassuming a frame. Long live long-form hip-hop.

More than two dozens bodies were bringing the heat; the shorter ones were dancing. The shortest three of these were elementary school girls – as terrified and amazed as anyone – (friends of) the sister(s) to Mac, Bloomfield house resident, and guitarist/shoutist/screamist for The Break Up (imagine Radiohead comprised of younger, angrier geeks, and you're halfway there). The band was flanked by Selwyn, keyboardist/vocalist of epic proportions on the (stage) left, and keyboardist Erin, whose head was much farther from the heavens and thus in less danger of being involved in a rafter collision, on the right. The two framed the band like mismatched pillars from a free-form gateway. The Break Up were loud and beautiful.



Sixtoo at the Bloomfield House Show.