



Rock Ranger's Jay Smith outside Baba's Lounge.

SATURDAY AUGUST 11, 2001

Before plaining The Attic, it was Rock Ranger's turn to showcase at the beer tent on Halifax Harbour. Like Slowcoaster, they had been warned in advance about their on-stage antics. For the most part they held back the random screams and wild behavior typical of a Rock Ranger performance, but by the time they played their finale, "Shotgun," they were ready to let out all their frustrations on an unsuspecting audience of celtic-rock fans. Jay and Mike were hollering away through much of the song, Mikey hocked a loogey, and as the song built up to a climax, Devon dropped to the deck and started spinning around in a dance that was like breakdancing, but less graceful.

After Rock Ranger finished everyone was keen on getting away from the Beer Tent, Signal Hill, Halifax Harbour, and the smell of raw sewage. While the band headed off to see The Heelwalkers before the show at The Attic, I walked down the boardwalk to see *The Princess Bride* projected on the side of a building as part

of a fund-raiser for the Atlantic Film Festival. The smell of the harbour got progressively worse as the wind swept across the boardwalk.

I felt like taking a shower after the movie, but I headed straight for The Attic since it was getting late. It was a wise decision to skip taking a shower before going to The Attic because Slowcoaster and Rock Ranger's performances made me feel dirty. Slowcoaster kicked things off with a tremendous amount of energy. Both bands were inspired after seeing The Heelwalkers ascend to new and exciting levels of debauchery. When Rock Ranger took the stage, Jay took of his shirt revealing the word "Heel" sloppily spelt on his chest with marker. "Walkers" was faintly visible, but disappearing under the sweat and spilt beer.

Each member of Rock Ranger was doused in a foamy spray of beer thanks to Devon. Throughout Rock Ranger's set, members of Slowcoaster would run on stage to spit beer all over the place. At one point, Mikey grabbed the mic from Jay and did vocals during a blues jam. The insanity taking place on stage was reflected

on the dance floor, with people swinging around to the sleazy sounds coming from the band. Jay balanced himself on top of a barrier between the stage and the dance floor to play a solo while being held up by members of the audience and getting soaked with more beer.

The show eventually deteriorated from a bar show at the Liquor Dome into an amazing punk concert circa Sydney in the early nineties, fueled by an audience of Cape Bretoners transplanted to Halifax, and on-the-spot covers of the underground anthems they grew up on played by Rock Ranger and guests. The highlight of the show was when Jay invited Harry Doyle on stage to sing a song by Tilted, a band that was once at the forefront of Sydney's independent music scene. The spirit of that scene was revived by this spontaneous guest appearance.

Rock Ranger and Slowcoaster were born out that scene, but now they are combining the energy and DIY ethics of Sydney's underground with the experience and education they

received by playing in various bands for so long in order to transform the typical bar band into something more creative and unexpected. Having them open for a celtic-rock band like Signal Hill is the perfect way to demonstrate how differently these musicians from Cape Breton operate compared to the lumbering dinosaurs of bar music.

The reaction from audiences exposed to this new breed of entertainers in Atlantic Canada is often shock and surprise from the energy and talent emerging from this group of artists. To most bar owners and patrons, these guys have appeared out of nowhere. But for the friends and fans in attendance at The Attic who knew Mike Morrison when he drummed for Mastodon Ridge and Sunfish, or for the people who remember when Devon Strang and Steve MacDougall used to play together in Vegapeeler, they always knew what the House of Rock was capable of. Tonight they are reminded of a past they shared with bands as Harry Doyle sings a song they all know the words to.

What are you going to do with the rest of your life???

- Item 1: Find out about the Third Annual Island Youth Forum on **Youth and Work** at <http://www.upei.ca/~iis/iisyf.htm>
- Item 2: Call or email Shannon to register for said Forum.
- Item 3: Go to Forum and find out about some of the possibilities; think about some of the challenges.

Thursday, November 15, 2001, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Wanda Wyatt Hall, UPEI Campus
Free Registration ~ Lunch provided

To register, contact
Shannon Hartigan at 566-0909 or shartigan@upei.ca



Hosted by the P.E.I. Youth Council and the Institute of Island Studies with financial support from the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy.



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