

SAPPY TIMES

YOU KNOW IT'S GOOD IF YOUR GUTS ARE SHAKING.

Monday

(looking back on Sunday)

August 1, 2011

Fin. This is what you call the triangle on the back of a shark, yes like sharks which attack. It is also what you call the calamity that just took place, right now, in your chest, when you picked up this paper and saw the word *Fin* and you realized, with violent shock, crying heart, shrieking spirit, and terrible, terrible sorrow, that it is Monday. SappyFest Six is over. It's done, *kaputt*, *khattam shud* and a wrap, such a wrap, perhaps even a rap, a farewell rap, with rhymes about anchors and sails, safe harbours, unexpected come-backs. Or expected come-backs. Come back! Oh, come back. Listen: there is a Sackville-sized hole in the most important part of you and it will stay there until a certain 2012 weekend when a certain tent will be erected in a certain place in your certain heart, and if you're not already counting the days it's because someone already did the counting for you. They counted to 362. Oh god, my friends: *three hundred & sixty two*. We're done for.

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It is Sunday. A man in a blouse is singing arty antelopey doo-wop. Pat Jordache & Co are dressed like city-slickers, boomy in the afternoon. It is hard, making night-time music when the sun is up. We gather close, try to make it work. "Radio" is all I need from a summer: wild blue calls, shine of guitar, one particular bassline, two drummers. I imagine a version of SappyFest that is attended exclusively by black cats.

FREE!

In the early afternoon, the day is still warming. Acorn are there, three of them, helping to bring the festival to temperature. The crowd push in, mercury nudged in a thermometer.

Drumheller's jazz is tortoise, as in tortoise & hare, a band that often seems slow, creeping, but that is secretly winning at life, learning every fact, feeling every feeling. They play several pretty songs, wrongly, at the same time. It is like different sands being poured onto a beach. The guitarist teaches a masterclass in losing things. The saxophone and trombone players blow their horns but they blow them contrarily, just air passing through. It is strange how a thing can be used in different ways, how sometimes we are bodies on Bridge Street, hidden from the sky, and other times we are lamps being lit, Chad VanGalen fans getting disembowelled, watermelon seeds in a band's ruby clutches.

Later, we go into the theatre, and Weather Report have just finished. Jim Bryson tells us we missed something very special. It's okay. We saw Drumheller instead. But this is SappyFest's agony. & also: when are you supposed to eat?

(Continued on the other side of this page.)

Everyone who sat in the Vogue's darkness on Sunday, around midday, was changed by it. It is not the darkness that did the changing, it was the things that happened in the light. A film of waved goodbyes, flawless poetry, a raspy voice singing "*and I'll take you, oo oo-oo*". A story that began with *Jurassic Park*, ended with a different way of seeing. The way strangers sat with an old family. I did not know Dawn-Aeron Wason and I wish I did. Her friends loved her.

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Shotgun Jimmie plays a guitar solo that is big-hearted, scrambled, like pouring delicious water through a saxophone, let's go swim in a lake. Later he grabs two actual saxes for a song about flowers. I have already used too many flower metaphors this weekend - so know that this song about flowers sounds like guitar, bass, drums, voice, two horns, bodies tangled & hot, glad, rad. This band play a fuckup cover of the Nerves and Jimmie is throwing knives, spearing jerks, asshole kids, unrequited loves. In the end he crows the thing he always crows, the caw I always caw back. "They say that you are what you eat / I feel like I musta ate a king." Every time I see Jimmie, he feeds me royalty.

"I had a whole bunch of trees fall down in my yard last week," Jim Bryson says. "I guess they just got bored." He plays the day's best and worst drum solo. He promises to give us each a car. He is wearing crocs and he sings bittersweet remedies and we are sitting in this theatre of table lamps and living-room plants. I am not sure who are the hosts and who are the guests, just that I trust Jim, one of the songwriters I have longest-loved, from back in the days when he played with the drummer from Shark Attack.

The drummer Jerry Granelli delivers a monologue in bangs: invitations, warnings, sudden tangents, premonitions. At the beginning, I feel, they are mostly warnings. *This is a loss, this is a wound I've seen, this is a doomed wish. Beware these things. Be forceful. Be not too forceful.* (This is not my wisdom: this is the wisdom I took from Jerry, and I may have misapprehended him.) When this 70-year-old yells nonsense at us, we yell back nonsense. It's the same nonsense we use when we're talking to our pets, murmuring to old lovers, yelling to our friends because we have glimpsed them across a crowd. Jerry plays

jokes: high-hats flipped, skipped, chipped. He asks us to clap. We clap. We cannot keep time.

After a weekend of meaning, simile, there is something rejuvenating about this music. It was the same with Drumheller. Abstraction leaves room for foreign birds to dart in.


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Sunday is not the kind of night that coalesces in a single moment, everyone united around the same candle, the same roadhouse fire. We are in different corners, drinking different pints of Melon Head or Feels Good, different bottles of spring- or fire-water. Jon Langford plays "Horses", such a brightly-made macabre. Grimes casts private young sorceries. Ladyhawk are four men plumbing depths, plus um Jimmie on tambourine. And the Sadies burn George's to its foundations.

But we are all together as we dream, slumped in beds and against walls, on lawns, with dumb smiles. Dumb smiles because SappyFest Six was the best, the best. We are together and we are dreaming. See paradise. It is 362 days away. - SM

JEFF'S WEATHER REPORT

By the time you read this the main stage tent and all the tables that supported hotdogs and sound boards and beer cups will have disappeared and Bridge St. will be on its way to full recuperation into a street once more. But as the weekend fades your loyal weather watcher must remind you of this: Sunday was beautiful. The sky worked out all its emotional shit and the sun came out to dry us. The smattering of billowy clouds only accentuated the blueness. All day I felt there might be nothing much to say about the co-operative weather, but looking up at the stars shining in the clear black sky on the walk to George's Roadhouse, I realized there is something to say. Thank you. Thank you, weather, for coming out and (mostly) behaving, for not knocking over the portapotties or electrocuting anyone. Thanks for being your wild, sweet, sappy, handsome self. You fit in just fine. - JM

SAPPY  TIMES is written by Sean Michaels, with a clearly designated contribution by Jeff Miller, who is fast & good. It is published due to the brave balls of SappyFest Six. This is the third of three issues, written between the hours of 10:47 pm and 3:35 am, distributed around Sackville as part of the 2011 festival. Sean lives in Montreal. He writes about music for legitimate publications and also at www.saidthegramophone.com, which is somewhat less legitimate. Jeff too lives in Montreal. He is the author of *Ghost Pine: All Stories True*. Both men will one day publish novels. They can be reached by email. // With gratitude to Paul, Jon, Thea, Spike & Judy.