

# SAPPY TIMES

LOBBYING FOR SEA PREDATORS SINCE 2009.

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## *Saturday*

*(looking back on Friday)*

July 30, 2011

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### ***SappyFest's tent said SHARK ATTACK.***

It said it right on it, in big black letters. I noticed this as soon as I arrived, because I am a very observant soul. You probably noticed it too, because you are all very observant souls. Everyone who attends SappyFest is a very observant soul; it is just one of those things.

This is SappyFest Six. I am so glad to be here with you for this sunny, rainy, snowy, haily weekend. Most of these weathers will be only figurative: the things we feel at the Vogue, the Legion, under the Mainstage's canvas - songs hitting us like hot/cold/lukewarm fronts. But at least one of these weathers will be real. We will feel it together, boy Saps and girl Saps, new Saps and old Saps, everyone united in the knowledge: *OH SH\*\* LOOK OUT THIS IS GOING TO BE AWESOME.*

OH SH\*\* LOOK OUT is also what I said to myself when I saw the sign about shark attacks. It filled me with foreboding. I was probably right to be afraid. At the end of Friday night, after the headliner had played, I looked out around the crowd. I smelled blood and saltwater; I saw glad, weary carnage; I saw hundreds of people, torn happily to pieces.

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## **FREE!**

The day starts much more gently. Everything is easy on Bridge Street. First-time SappyFesters, shaking with the thrill. Old-timers, waving, smiling, reminding one-another about wall-ball scores. Gossiping about the shark attack. Naturally, I get a henna tattoo. It matches my friend's: a tiny spiral, a private seashell. Immediately, accidentally, I smudge it. I am distracted. Sackville is too full of wonders.

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Ilse: "I am so excited my head is going to explode."

The first things on Friday are the Woodshed Orchestra's thrift-store grooves. The band sidle between the loiterers and up onto the stage. "Everybody needs love and affection!" they sing. Nobody disagrees. The Orchestra lead extremely democratic sing-alongs, the kind that are forbidden in North Korea, a land where people do not get to enjoy the embarrassment and jolly selflessness of freely singing-along.

Later, Daniel Romano plays with the Trilliums. They are a six-piece band named for several three-pointed flowers. They don denim jackets, neck-handkerchiefs, the sort of clothes that people used to wear in the old days, or that people still do

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wear, if they live on the set of a historical drama. Romano's noir country seems like a foreshadowing, a reminder of the stories the Sadies will tell, darkly, later this weekend. Misha Bower wears a solemn black dress. She stands beside Daniel, singing, sometimes with help from Julie Doiron. They seem like his mother, daughter, wife & conscience. They are his past & future. But the steel-player is Daniel's friend.

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In Owen Pallett's SappyFest program write-up there's something about hyacinths. As he plays, the lights lift and there they are, painted green and pink on the roof of the tent, as if this were a hothouse.

Owen is playing with les Mouches, his old band. He raps his knuckles against his violin, like the setup of a knock-knock joke, a request to get let in. They play Final Fantasy songs and more recent things, a cover of Caribou's "Odessa" that is thinner, straining. They play "This is the Dream of Win & Regine" and it feels like a time capsule flung forward. There are plips, whirrs, the new-old sound of a bow pulled across violin strings. Rob Gordon's battery of drums. "*I tried and tried and tried / to keep the crowds away!*" Owen shouts. We're staying put, fizzing, waiting to be maimed by a band that say they're from Longueuil.

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The thing about *real* shark attacks is that they do not even get listed on the program.

I have written more words about Shark Attack than about any other band in the world. We go back a long time. So what do I say after a very long wait, when they step atop the SappyFest stage, pick up their instruments, and lash us with a song? I say: "*WOOOOOOO*", like I am a whistle being blown.

Shark Attack play their loud music in front of the flashing coloured lights. They play their hearts out, sweaty and hoarse and happy and great, fortified by touring, sparked by this furious surprise, and their tunes have more *ooohs* than I

remember. Shark Attack play the largest tent in Sackville like it is the largest stage at Glastonbury. They roar and grin. The crowd is going crazy. Most of us know all the words. These are anthems young enough that we *chose* for them to be anthems.

It is good when we all yell, "WE FOUND THE LIGHT!" It is good when Shark Attack play "The Suburbs", and this humble, melancholy tune feels at home in New Brunswick. It is good when Régine glitters and tilts, singing "Haiti" with will & joy & hope, and we're all on our tiptoes, ringing.

But listen, the lesson here is not that one of the biggest bands in the world can play a Sappy stage. It's that bigness is close. Magic is near. It's a thing you can touch, or climb to. Shark Attack have luck, spirit, songs. They have *lots* of luck, *lots* of spirit, *lots* of songs. And one semi truck. But they are human and *just there*. You can chase them. - SM

#### JEFF'S WEATHER REPORT

No one writes about the weather *after* it happens unless someone dies because of it. Future historians will conclude that our weather was nothing but typhoons and tornadoes, blizzards and blusters. Only *Sappy Times* dares to report on days like Friday, when the sun came out and shone over the entire stretch of rail from Truro to Sackville. Perfect weather, not only for gazing out at trees from the train window, but for drinking beers on balconies and eating veggie dogs on the picnic tables of Bridge St with an awesome summer soundtrack. The weather turned cooler after supper but a localized heat wave took place under the bright lights of the main stage tent. SappyFest organizers were sweet enough to put a roof over summer. The cool breeze returned on the walk to the Legion where it was just one of many old friends to be greeted again. - JM

*REAL LIVE SAPS: Jeff & Sean will be part of the SappyFest Writers Reading @ 3pm today (Saturday) at the Legion. Yes, at the Zine Fair. Cat & dogcalls welcome.*

*SAPPY ☉ TIMES is written by Sean Michaels, with a clearly designated contribution by Jeff Miller, who is kind & skillful. It is published by SappyFest Six. This is the first of three issues, distributed around Sackville as part of the 2011 festival. Sean lives in Montreal. He writes about music for legitimate publications and also at [www.saidtbeagramophone.com](http://www.saidtbeagramophone.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. Send them letters via City Mail and their heads will explode. // With gratitude to Paul Henderson and Thea Metcalfe.*