

# SAPPY TIMES

DOCUMENTING BOG SORCERY SINCE 2009.

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## *Saturday*

*(looking back on Friday)*

July 31, 2010

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*The parade that begins Sappyfest* includes one squid (fake), one jellyfish (fake), one horse (real), one lanternfish (fake) and one cyclist (real). The cyclist may have been there by accident.

No accident brought me here. I spent 15 deliberate hours on a bus. I braved snoring neighbours, the Lake of the Wolf, north-Irish ex-cons. You probably braved worse: mountains, rapids, the envy of your stay-at-home friends. Perhaps even lions (real). All to come here, to Sappyfest number five, the greatest festival in all the world, at least if you like this kind of thing, which we do.

Despite the involvement of a marching band, Sappyfest does not begin with a bang. It begins with a *Hey*. With a hundred *Heys*. In Friday's early evening, before the sign for Mel's Tea Room is yet illuminated, they begin to fill Bridge Street. They linger and hang. They wait for the tent that's already open to truly open; like, for real. Friends meet, clasp. They say you know what.

The first band to play are called the News. The dry,

exquisitely moustachioed MC explains that they have nothing to do with Huey Lewis. I will say right here that this is Huey Lewis's loss. If nothing else, the News seem like really nice people and Huey Lewis seems like a guy who usually hangs out with douchebags.

The News, like most of the bands at this festival, play rock'n'roll. They are a strange gang, all different shapes and sizes. They do not look as if they should really be in a band together. I guess this means they look like a supergroup. One of their leaders, a man I suspect was just recently a boy, sings a lyric about "*memories of the past*", and I wonder what this very young man has got to remember. But then I get over myself and listen to these ringing raw guitars and I realise: the same brokenhearted shit as everybody else.

The News also perform what is as far as I know the rockiest-ever song about Sackville's weather.

Shotgun Jimmie plays songs about holding hands, running in packs, beers in pockets. He has an acoustic on

**FREE!**

*(Continued on the other side of this page.)*

his lap and a kick-drum at his feet. It is potato-chip-crisp guitar pop, and it is utterly outstanding. "They say that you are what you eat," he sings, "and I feel like I musta ate a king."

But Shotgun Jimmie, what about us? How do we feel? Here's how: We feel like each of us just got high-fived so hard that our finger-bones shattered. We're all nursing our poor hands, & grinning. At our king.

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A small boy weaves past me. He is wearing a wife-beater t-shirt with the image of a skull on fire. I am not the least bit scared.

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Julie Doiron and Will Kidman sing "Love Hurts". Julie reminds us that this song has been performed by Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris, and by Nazareth. A man roars: "NAZARETH!" Nobody yells: "Emmylou!"

A 7' plush red and yellow creature, part space-man and part ape-man, is here. In sandals. The creature digs Steamboat. I watch as two children scamper up behind the creature and touch the back of its legs. The creature does not notice them stroking its fur. The creature has other things on its mind than people running their fingers through its hair.

Attack in Black continue the Sappyfest tradition of bands like Ladyhawk, Constantines, Eric's Trip and uh Attack in Black last year, playing those low guitar notes that sound like sparks running up the columns of a barn. Their songs are crashing and sympathetic. As the singers' two voices braid, the birds on the sign behind them seem suddenly as if they are diving toward the earth. "You could teach me how to not be sappy," sings Daniel

Romano. He is definitely not singing to me. I am only able to teach people how to be sappier than they are.

By a picnic table, I meet a surgeon. I learn he played at Sappy once. Of course he did. Later I meet Nicole, from Midgic. "I don't know anyone here!" she complains. She has a couple suggestions for getting more locals to attend the festival: (a) cheaper ticket prices; (b) cheaper beer. She says the music is fine.

Before the Felice Brothers go on stage, the tent is flooded with smoke. This isn't necessary. We are already combustible. The Brothers look like five guys who play with matches. They fill the night haze with stoned country ballads. I can feel the beer swishing in my blood. The stage is pink and silver and black. It does not turn out to be like a fire, after all. We have been lowered into a lusty, longing dream. At a certain point, this dream includes a washboard.

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Later, we find ourselves baffled on the flat grey concrete of the Civic Centre. We missed the rules to roller derby and as the girls circle in torn stockings and helmets, floating midnight visions, the fluorescent-lit amphitheatre seems deeply surreal. Chin Straps and Purple Knight sound jubilant and arbitrary. There are sudden charges, easy victories, inexplicable collapses. Behind the bands, a sign advertises the funeral home.

But then at the end of the night, after all the sappy B.S., we finally get some wrestling. Actual wrestling. By men in spandex. Before Holy Fuck begin their effervescent grinding, a man in a Spider-Man suit faces off against a *luchador* heel. The crowd is confused, transfixed; the crowd shouts obscenities. It is stupid, silly, sincere. It is incredible. It is swamp magic. & the first night of three.

More treasures await. Hold yr breath. 