



# What Goes



By David Morrison

Through long-held associations with pivotal figures of the Canadian roots music community, I arrived pre-primed to the banjos, folk fests, fiddles and torrid bluegrass summers ahead. Partial to melodies of rustic character, I was greatly comforted to have these

in waiting. Some hazy day way back then, I'd also gleaned that the blues was a locally prominent cultural force with pan-generational appeal, seemingly in metronomic synch with the West Coast rhythm of life. Yet aside from this scant knowledge of Vancouver Island's general sonic preferences, plus an obvious awareness of one Mrs. Costello's international achievements, I knew little. In terms of the racket made by the spunky young moderns of the region, for example, I was heading into an intriguing unknown. And I couldn't wait.

Catapulted here in December by bizarre, cosmically conspiratorial factors you would not believe, I came from a hip English coastal town proud of a dizzying music scene of global

repute, one in which I'd been deeply entrenched for nearly 20 years. It remains a sickening wrench to have left these friends and their great art behind, but life just took that turn. Consequently, as one that lusts music like few you will meet, pretty much the first move made after my bags crashed permanently to Canadian soil was to commence the search for savvy souls of a rock 'n' roll persuasion. It didn't take long to find them.

With nary a cursory glance at what goes on, I am able to tell you, Nanaimo, that your independent scene is in rude health and creating some very beautiful noise. Flatbed is a case in point. A night-on possessed boy-girl pairing smashing out a liberating, instrumental ca-



# On?

cophony with drums and 2-string bass on 'Exterminate' setting, The White Stripes it ain't. Not for the meek, this is genuine revolution rock. Flatbed's bass beast Mike also drums with The Sheds, purveyors of a beefy indie rock informed by the coolest pop and psychedelia. Singer Mel in turn constitutes half of the bewitching Sister Ray, one of numerous parallel projects from the influential Jakob Rehlinger that range in influence from Black Sabbath to Pet Shop Boys and, frankly, most bands in between or on either flank.

The feisty young female duos Bash Brothers and Old Phoebe deliver edgy, attitudinal pop and mischievous, lo-fi loveliness respectively, but I suspect neither have any comprehension of

just how good they are. Listen to the sublime "Worry" on the Bash Brothers' MySpace page, then try tell me it's not stunning. You'd be wrong. Just as impressive, especially live, is the crackerjack gang of surf rock disciples grooving like things unraveled under the moniker Los Tycoons. For the frenzied frug of your life, catch them at all costs riding that swell like champions, whammy bars on fire.

There's so much more; I see that already, but must temporarily reign in and lavish praise beyond this seemingly concordant community of Hub City musicians. Because to my utter delight, there is contemporary rock activity far beyond these walls. Indeed, heading to live here, could I have entertained the notion of a throbbing 'emo' and metal scene in Port Alberni? This seems to be the case and I'm sure the town's Oneiro, Dexedrin, Knox & Vale and Oceanic alone would back my claims.

On that flight over, dreaming of a (now fulfilled) return to Parksville Beach to stroll hand-in-hand with my wife, did I consider for one moment that the ilk of incendiary hardcore punks Strict District could be rehearsing no farther away than I could skim a stone? Not likely, but maybe they were, as I have evidence enough from a quick sniff around that from Lake Cowichan to Lantzville to Gabriola Island to Duncan, there should be plenty here to keep me perpetually never less than interested.

So the beat does go on. Thank heavens for that. ■



Photos, left: Sheds & Loan Gallery; middle: Los Tycoons, Babel; above: Flatbed

## Nanaimo's Specialty Coffee Lounge



**Serving up the best specialty coffee drinks you will ever encounter!**

Plus: treats from the "Temptation Case", and some healthy, hearty & tasty foodstuff for any time you might be nibbly!

**Open:**

Weekends 10 am - 9pm  
Monday - Friday 8am - 9pm  
(open later for event nights)



- Front & Back Patios • Inside Lounge
- "Secret Garden" • Licensed

250-754-6693

357 Wesley Street, Nanaimo, BC  
...in the old city quarter!

[www.gypsymermaid.com](http://www.gypsymermaid.com)