



This is me and my friends Glen and Erin at Dicken's Pub last night, for the Myelin Sheaths.

I have to confess that I hadn't given [Sled Island](#) a lot of thought this year. Even though I've been happy to speak to anybody who'd listen about Calgary's insurgent music (and "arts") festival that's a sort of local version of the larger and much more established SXSW or NXNE festivals, even though [I had a great time at last year's event](#) (the "concerts in the park" part at Mewata Armoury), and even though I have now met and even had lunch with local club owner, cultural visionary, chowhound, and (most important in this context) founder of Sled Island, Zak Pashak, I waited until Monday of last week to buy my pass (\$99 and an absolutely shocking deal) and didn't start consulting the festival program until Wednesday. I was expecting to see the Friday (one day only this year) outdoors lineup at Olympic Plaza and, honestly, see a couple of the films on offer of about 30 titles as part of the festival; that's part of where the "arts" aspect is becoming more apparent.

I ended up doing a lot more, stepping outside of my comfort zone and seeing some club performances, even one at (gasp) midnight. See, I have not seen shows in clubs for many, many years. The last time I was a regular in any club context was for the very short-lived slate of punk shows at the South Shore Inn in Hammond- and that was in 1983. I've not seen NOTHING but I've avoided clubs because of smoke (now irrelevant of course but this has always been a huge issue for me), but also because shows start too late and also I cannot stand having to strain to hear the band over the chatter that surrounds me at such places. I remember how horrible it was when Brian and I went to see the Hidden Cameras as part of the 2006 High Performance Rodeo (this was at the Big Secret Theatre, not a nightclub, so at least there was no smoke there), and we had to endure screaming "conversations" from so many of the apparently uninterested idiots who showed up for... no reason, I guess. I hate this. I hate it at Folk Fest and I hate it in clubs; the beauty of seeing a concert in a theatre is that nobody TALKS there. And so I don't see as much live music as I'd probably like to.

BUT all that changed these past few days. I saw outstanding shows by artists like Brasstronaut (from Vancouver) and Calgary's Azeda Booth on Thursday night; Friday was the Olympic Plaza show, some of which I liked very much but not enough to make the seating un-painful (it's a sort of stepped bowl, like Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square, with plenty of places to sit but none comfortable for more than a short while). I took some pics; first, the delightful, fun, involved Biz Markie:



He put on a great, but too short, performance. Some of what followed was forgettable, but most definitely not the Toronto noisemaker collective, Holy Fuck. They were outstanding:



Headliners were The Breeders, who seem to have a completely new lineup (aside from Kelly and Kim Deal, of course), and I wasn't as thrilled with them as I expected to be, but they were pretty good, and crowd pleasers for sure. It was almost dark at 11:30 (that's how it is here in late June!) when I departed. Here's the scene:



Now, in the midst of waiting for performances to commence (especially The Breeders, who were a good 40 minutes late, pretty galling when I'd been suffering back spasms at the plaza since 4pm), it was interesting to spot so many musicians strolling around. I saw Owen Pallett (Final Fantasy), two people whom I'd see perform the next day as Before Dawn from Austin Texas, members of Azeda Booth (nice guys! I got to shake hands with each of them), Women, Beija Flor, and among all of these talented people I just HAD to ask one, [Chad Van Gaalen](#), for a pic. He seemed a little annoyed at first and then said he'd hold the camera since he towers a good 10" above me. And then he acted like he was going to toss my camera away- it was actually really funny and ROCK AND ROLL. Then he snapped three photos in quick succession and here I give you his artistry:



So there you go. I joked back that it's okay if he'd tossed my camera because "I hate this camera," and he said, "I hate cameras." So I'm not sure if he wasn't really annoyed; he's a very talented (VERY talented) animation artist and so maybe I captured some insight into him. Brilliant artist and musician, and I'm happy to be met (or annoyed) him.

Then yesterday (Saturday) I actually went to shows at three venues, the Lord Nelson Pub, Dickens Pub (to see one of our PhD students, Paul Lawton, with his entertaining-as-anything "garage band," Myelin Sheaths), and then the always amazing Beija Flor at the Marquee Room. That makes part of FIVE club shows for me, and I also saw a performance at the Plaza Theatre by the punk-metal (for lack of a better descriptor) Calgary outfit, Cripple Creak Fairies, as a precursor to a pretty silly and trite 1977 documentary about "glitter rock." I wish I'd had the energy to make it to the Wednesday night performance by Final Fantasy at Central United Church, but youtube comes to my rescue:

Great job!

This entry was posted on June 28, 2009 at 9:12 pm and is filed under [Calgary](#), [Culture](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

## Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

**XHTML:** You can use these tags: `<a href="" title="">` `<abbr title="">` `<acronym title="">` `<b>` `<blockquote cite="">` `<cite>` `<code>` `<pre>` `<del datetime="">` `<em>` `<i>` `<q cite="">` `<strike>` `<strong>`

Notify me of follow-up comments via email.

« [\[cough\] Blog \[cough\]. Also, \[blog\] cough \[blog\].](#)  
[Calgary coffee updates](#) »

[Blog at WordPress.com](#). | Theme: Andreas09 by [Andreas Viklund](#).