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Calgary music goes downhill

Sled Island bursting at the seams with local talent
Published June 11, 2009 by [Dane Swanson](#) in [411](#)

It's easy, when festival season rolls around in Calgary, to get star-struck by the sheer volume of talent flooding into our city from around the world. The third annual Sled Island festival is a prime example — big names, old favourites and artistic ground-breakers will cross paths and share stages all over the city this June. Still, while it will feature countless tantalizing listening experiences from around the world, some of the least expected pleasures might be lurking in your own backyard.

If you've been following this column regularly, it should come as no surprise that Calgary is brimming with creative energy, but festival season is especially effective at coaxing all shapes and sizes of local weirdos out of the woodwork. In addition to performances by some of our most beloved young local talent, such as **Azeda Booth**, **Hot Little Rocket**, **The Dudes**, **Women**, **Beija Flor**, **Woodpigeon**, **Puberty**, **Axis of Conversation**, **Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir**, **Knots**, **Dragon Fli Empire**, **Ghostkeeper**, **Heat Ray**, **Knucklehead**, **lint**, **Lucid 44**, **The Neckers**, **Thighs**, **Friendo**, **Sharp Ends**, **Racoon**, and many more, the festival is bringing a tidal wave of undiscovered sounds and projects to the spotlight, and your old pal Dane hand-selected a few such newcomers that are just too curious to ignore.

Festival founder and man-about-town Zak Pashak has made his pick for "Best Submission to Sled Island," and ironic or not, **The Envelopes Filled With Cash** have the potential to make us laugh, make us squirm with awkwardness, or pull a wild card and rock some faces off. The only evidence of their flavour of novelty indie-pop is a scant few home recordings, one of which is an unsettling Moldy Peaches-style jam about competing with a girl next door, and another a naive ditty about getting your shit together called "What a Young Man Ought to Know." It's anyone's guess what kind of creepy, wonderful spell they will cast on audience members on Thursday, June 25 at the Bamboo Tiki Lounge.

The next recommendation comes from local scene veteran Lorrie Matheson, for a band of young hooligans called **Bell Tower**. With a snarl that brings to mind The Stooges and defunct Edmonton band the Mark Birtles Project, these 18-year-olds are sure to blow back a few festival-goers' hair at The Marquee Room on Saturday, June 27.

Heading further into the gnarlier side of town, members of all-ages hardcore darlings Act Fast and punk-rockers the Skitzos have recently joined forces to form **Sabretooth**. Judging from their MySpace demos, despite having emerged only last month, the band is a powerhouse of ear-crushing riffs with a melodic edge that already makes them candidates for Calgary's best party band. The all-ages Pint-Sized Distro showcase, also featuring **Black Death Boners**, **Brain Fever** and **Hobophobes**, should prove the perfect place to start Sabretooth's rampage.

Like Los Angeles two-piece No Age at last year's Sled Island, this year's fest will also be blown away by some lo-fi indie rock, brought to you violently by the new trash-eaters in town, **The Neckbeards**. Taking cues from Philadelphia label Siltbreeze, Black Flag, and lo-fi pop project Wavves, and featuring members of Mount Analogue and The Consonant C, the band has enough grime and fuzz to please even the angriest of fist-pumpers, and enough pop sensibility to keep foot-tappers pleased as peaches. They'll be playing on Thursday, June 25, at Tubby Dog.

If you couldn't tell from the overall rowdiness of Dane's picks, I'm predicting this year's Sled Island to be the most energetic one yet, with shows on every night to guarantee gallons of happy sweat and ecstatic primal screams. So rest now, if you must, because come the last weekend in June, we'll all be splashing in the pool. Check out [sledisland.com](#) for the festival schedule and more info on bands.

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Kendall Fahey

Skronky lo-fi rockers The Neckbeards are one of a glut of local bands playing the Sled Island festival at the end of this month.

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