

Wafer Thin Mints a coffee table snack

Wafer Thin Mints

With The Fat Dave Crime Wave and Down The Hatch
Tuesday, 31 October at 9pm
Sidetrack Café

TONY KESS
Arts & Entertainment Writer

It's pre-rehearsal for the Wafer Thin Mints' Halloween show at the Sidetrack Café, yet there's no stress around the coffee table at drummer Johnathan Baker's house. There are no pre-show jitters, or self-aggrandizing talk of the CJSR chart success of their upcoming album *The Finest Car They Ever Built In 1983*; instead, there's just light-hearted conversation, and above all else, coffee. This should come as no surprise, though, for prior to playing together, the quartet had always been drawn together by the call of caffeine.

"We all go to the Sugar Bowl," Baker says. "Before that it was Café La Garre on the corner of 80th and 81st, but we all liked to hang out at the coffee shop."

"We've all known each other since the late '80s," songwriter Pat Strain recounts. "We made a blood pact to always be in the same band."

Treaties aside, the members of the Wafer Thin Mints are no novices to the Edmonton music scene; they've been playing together in a string of different groups since the early '90s, starting with a power pop group in '91.

"Three of us were in a band called



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

JAVA JIVE The Wafer Thin Mints have known each other for over 25 years, and to this day they can't resist setting down their instruments for a cup of coffee.

the Cone of Silence, and ever since then, that's the band that we are remembered as," Strain says.

Playing together throughout so many different music trends is likely to affect a group's sound, but the band now known as the Wafer Thin Mints mark a more mature era in the group's musical career, one divergent enough to quell any Cone of Silence comparisons.

"This band is a bit of a departure from the old one; this band is a little more quiet and reflective," Strain says.

"We just threw the acoustic guitar into the mix to lighten things up," Baker continues. "If Cone of Silence

was a band like Yes, then Wafer Thin Mints would be Glass Tiger," he jokes.

As the band has progressed, so has music distribution. New media like the Internet and sites like MySpace are now a part of music promotion, and the Wafer Thin Mints have taken notice both of the benefits and shortcomings of these new tools.

"People couldn't have used these resources as much ten years ago," Strain says. "I think that the gates are wide open now."

"We were on the 'net right away; it got us to a few festivals, and it seemed to have an effect," Baker explains. "But

now there's so much out there that it's hard to get a signal through all the noise. Still, it's cool to get feedback. It's great on the creativity side."

Lately, feedback is exactly what the Wafer Thin Mints have been getting, and for the most part, it's been positive. Their album, *The Finest Car They Ever Built In 1983*, produced by Steve Loree, is currently at number seven on the CJSR charts, garnering more play than big name artists such as DJ Shadow and TV On The Radio.

"On commercial radio, maybe it means that you're going to sell a disc or two, but on public radio, it means that you're going to get downloaded

more, and that maybe people want to know who you are," Baker says.

With all the buzz surrounding their new album, and the people who're curious to know more about the Mints, they obviously better put forward their best faces on Halloween—or maybe not.

"We get up, we play, we leave and people clap," Baker jokes. "No, we're going to be in some costumes, and anyone who shows up in costume gets a discount at the door. The band has been considering a few options: Spice Girls was one, but we figure Pussycat Dolls is a little bit more relevant."



JESSE WHITEHEAD

DIRTY LITTLE DEVILS Rum Runner and Hollywood Gods played at The Loft Saturday night.



The Decemberists

The Crane Wife
Capitol Records
www.decemberists.com

MATTHEW BARRETT
Arts & Entertainment Writer

The Crane Wife marks The Decemberists switch-a-roo from indie label Kill Rock Stars to Capitol Records. For a band that's cultivated its sound from the unconventional (Wurlitzer organs and accordions, anyone?) and its lyrics

from mythology as much as history textbooks or travel guides, the switch to a label with a more mainstream focus is alarming. But when it boils down to it, have The Decemberists really lost their shtick in the change?

The answer, simply enough, is no. The Decemberists' distinctive sound hasn't been curtailed for *The Crane Wife*, and Colin Meloy's lyrics are as strong as ever. In his retelling of the Japanese folktale—the album takes its name from the grisly track "Shankill Killers," a tune about a gang that roamed city streets killing Roman Catholics—Meloy's approach to songwriting is as creative and emotionally resonant as ever.

But that doesn't mean there aren't noticeable differences between The Decemberists of then and now. Their sound is noticeably more accessible; more polished, preened and radio-and-TV-ready. Don't get me wrong; it's still good, and it should still satisfy long-time fans, but the transition in The Decemberists latest release is the same one as in Death Cab and Modest Mouse's latest releases. It's that calm before the mainstream storm.



This pumpkin is a work of genius. Look at the carving technique utilized to trace the intricate lines of Harry's face. Amazing.

Pumpkin carving, like graffiti, is a debatable art, but if you attend Gateway A&E meetings (Thursdays at 5pm in 3-04 SUB), we will enlighten you with the plethora of other works that should be considered art—like Bryan Adams' "Summer of '69."

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