

## SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

### The Philosopher Kings

With Jon Levine Band  
Friday 24 November at 8pm  
Starlite Room, 18+  
\$27.50 advance at ticketmaster.ca and Megatunes

For all you first-year philosophy majors studying for finals, a back to basics review is essential. Plato, a little known Greek philosopher, proposed the idea of The Philosopher Kings, a funk loving pop-rock group, whose spirited and groove-laden music would aid in the creation of the ideal utopian state. Fast forward two millennia, and The Philosopher Kings hail from Toronto (needless to say, Plato was no Nostradamus).

### The Dears

With The Blood Lines  
Saturday, 25 November at 8pm  
Starlite Room  
Tickets \$20 at Tickmaster, Blackbyrd, Megatunes and Listen Records

Montréal's The Dears are like the older, less well-known brother of Broken Social Scene. Years of experience have tightened up their experimental art-rock sound, enabling them to communicate their musical vision without needing—unlike their next of kin—the staff numbers boasted by your local Walmart. They espouse their socially and politically charged voice on their new disc, *Gang of Losers*, particularly on their single "Whites Only Party," which, as the title suggests, discusses the merits of a single annual celebration for the under-represented group of privileged white people. We'll call it Caucasofest.



### Rachele van Zanten

Saturday, 25 November at 8pm  
The Powerplant  
\$12

When you think of a slide guitarist, a young, hip songstress may be the last thing that would come to mind. But Rachele van Zanten has never followed conventions. The Painting Daisies' slidester returns to Canada for a solo show after stints in Europe and the US, bringing her bluegrass sounds and mean guitar chops to the U of A campus. A former student herself, van Zanten was creator of Rocker Girl Camp, a *School of Rock*-style summer camp for young females interested in the fine art, thankfully instilling a whole new generation with some skills that will let them do something more than making a simple "Complicated" or "Sk8ter Boi."

### Sarah Sleam

With Guests  
Sunday, 26 November at 7pm  
Myer Horowitz Theatre  
\$18

In the British feudal system, the title of baron and baroness was established by William the Conqueror as a rank for noblemen who had pledged their allegiance to him. Unfortunately, the title is also the lowest rank in the system, even below those asshole viscounts. It's confusing, then, that Sarah Sleam decided to take on the title of "The Baroness," as she's a Gemini-award winning singer-songwriter and pianist who is arguably one of Canada's most talented up-and-coming stars. It probably sounds sexier than Duke. As well, she holds significant land titles due to her stardom and could move up in rank should she wed the Fourth Earl of Huntingtongshire.

JOHN KMECH  
A&E super sleuth



## From street corner to stage

Chad VanGalen thanks his early mixtapes and avid busking for the musical respect he's earned

### Chad VanGalen

With These Hands and Lane Arndt  
Friday, 24 November at 9pm  
Sidetrack Café

EDAMON MCGRATH  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Chad VanGalen plays like a busker, which fits, because he's still one at heart.

It's not everyday you hear a Sub Pop artist talk as though he was sitting on a street corner in his hometown, selling CD-Rs and mixtapes out of a guitar case; but then again, VanGalen's not your everyday songwriter. On his latest release, *Skelliconnection*, VanGalen manages to weave the lyrical surrealism of low-fidelity rock god Robert Pollard and the post-punk aesthetic of Sonic Youth with the delicate folk of M Ward or Bob Dylan, sometimes all within the confines of a single song.

"I was starting from nowhere. I grew up with my mom, and we didn't listen to any music at all," VanGalen admits over the phone from his Calgary home. "I was able to get introduced to Sonic Youth later in life, along with Big Black, Steve Reich and John Cage at the tail end of high school, and that's sort of what triggered a lot of the songwriting."

VanGalen attests that he did what any punk rocker would do: he grabbed two ghetto blasters, some cassettes and a classical guitar he found in his basement, then started writing songs. Eventually, on the suggestion of a friend, he bought a four-track recorder. VanGalen's two albums up, and he hasn't even yet turned back from the original lo-fi methodology that has come to help define his sound and style.

"I was really scared to move away from that," VanGalen says, regarding his loyalty to his Tascam recorder. "I can see everything on the four track. I can see the inputs and the outputs. I don't have to scroll through these menus that don't really exist."

Since the explosion of low-fidelity recordings in the early '90s, songwriters and bands have consistently tried to emulate the aesthetic; for VanGalen, it happened more naturally.

**"I've been touring for six weeks at a time now, so I'm freaking out about that. Just knowing that there's an audience out there, or knowing that I'll have to explain myself or take responsibility for this at some point is weird enough."**

CHAD VANGALEN

"The lo-fi thing wasn't for any other reason than I couldn't afford a computer at the time, and I had no idea how to use one anyway. I'm always searching for the best sounding thing, and although it is a certain aesthetic, it's not governed by what recording technologies I'm using."

There's an element of a love of process that comes through VanGalen's recordings as well, and that connection is definitely intentional. It's a fact that a lot of do-it-yourself musicians see themselves as hands-on, metaphorically sculpting sound into grooves or magnetic tapes, and VanGalen feels no different. The beauty of

lo-fi has always been that there's always something left up to chance: just as much as a song can sound beautiful layered in tape hiss, it can sound equally as harsh on the ears.

This suits VanGalen just perfectly, because it's the truth that he's no stranger to luck.

"I was busking for awhile, selling CD-Rs and mixtapes," VanGalen says about what kick-started his musical career. "One of those recordings must have gotten out onto the internet or something, because I got approached by Secretly Canadian, Arts & Crafts and Sub Pop at the same time. There were no demos sent out or anything. I was just freaking out."

When a chance of that magnitude comes from that far out of left field, especially in VanGalen's case, life sometimes has to catch up with you. VanGalen, when asked about certain changes that occurred from pre-Sub Pop to now, is surprisingly humble.

"I don't have a day job, so I sleep a lot more," he says jokingly. "But because I don't have a job, I can focus on my visual arts, and my live performance has changed. I've been touring for six weeks at a time now, so I'm freaking out about that. Just knowing that there's an audience out there, or knowing that I'll have to explain myself or take responsibility for this at some point is weird enough."

Despite how modest he is, VanGalen remains perhaps the closest thing to a stereotype definition of an artist that Alberta has: committed, focused and determined to push forward.

"Now, when I'm home I'm just sort of spending time in the studio that's in my basement," VanGalen says. "The next [album's] going to be good, so I'm back to where I was, and I'm having more fun than I've ever had with music."