



MATT FREHNER

CITY SLICKERS Edmonton-based City Vox might be a new group, but they're no stranger to the musical back alleys.

City Vox shapes its voice

City Vox

With Black Berry Traffic
Tuesday, 28 November at 9pm
Sidetrack Café

BRYAN SAUNDERS
Arts & Entertainment Writer

In 1959, British musical-equipment manufacturer, Vox, released the very first AC-30 guitar amplifier. This seemingly simple event changed music history forever. The Vox AC-30 was used by such legends as The Who, the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix, and has even been attributed to their success.

In April of 2006, Edmontonians Patrick Gilmour (vocalist, guitarist), Mike Swanson (guitar, vocals), Chris Biggs (drums) and John Procyk (bass) of the newly formed band, City Vox, recorded their very first song, "I Am Waiting." They later went on to record three more songs, soon releasing their first demo CD.

While the historical magnitudes of the second event may not yet be clear, one thing is: according to Mike Swanson, City Vox have got a handful of tunes, pretty much cracker-jacked, ready to go into the studio to record

sometime in the next few months, and the band has four more up their sleeves.

"I'd say these [four] upcoming recordings will definitely have a bit of an edgier sound to them," Swanson says. "The previous four tunes were heavily influenced by Patrick's solo songwriting approach. And now that we have the influence of our bass player and drummer, we have more of a rock sound."

And just as the quartet's sound is constantly changing, the ever-shifting forces of nature—and resilience of a serving job—are what brought City Vox together.

"The nice thing about working a job like that ... is it gives you the flexibility to play, it's good money and it's something I can pick up or leave at anytime," Gilmour says. And I went 'Okay, well here's the time now. I'm gonna pick up and I'm gonna leave.'

"The other big thing for me was that my girlfriend really gave me a push. She said, 'Look, you've been doing this for a long time; you've got the songs, you've got another guitar player and you've got Mike, who plays great guitar, so just do it. Why aren't you doing it?' And so I did."

From there, an ad in the paper was placed for a drums and bass, and as fate would have it, John Procyk and Chris Biggs fit the criteria.

While for most musicians rounding out a solid lineup is the hardest task to accomplish, Gilmour and Swanson had bigger fish than that to fry—or at least so they thought.

"I think the biggest obstacle for me was myself, really," Gilmour says. "I wanted to be playing music as a career. I wanted to be playing shows, meeting people and interacting with people. I wanted to be making a difference in some kind of way. I wanted to use my gifts to their fullest potential. Now, I just love the direction that we're headed, and it feels really good."

"I guess it was fear for me," Swanson says. "Fear of seeing what I could really do, and I was always coming up with excuses why not to go forward, to pursue. And then beginning to play with Patrick and really solidifying it with the other two guys in the band, it really feels like I'm spreading my wings. I think the feeling we're all getting is that this is the best thing we've ever been involved in."

The arts aren't going to bite



MARIA KOTOVYCH

I feel sorry for Whyte Avenue. It's developing a reputation as a place where people get drunk, get stabbed and start riots on Canada Day, or when the Oilers make the playoffs.

Yes, these things do happen, and it's unfortunate. But Lord Strathcona doesn't need to start turning over in his grave just yet. After all, not everyone who heads to Whyte and its environs on Saturday night is going to get smashed.

Whyte Ave, Old Strathcona and the University area are bursting with local theatre talent. The stage has a strong presence in those parts of the city, and it can actually be cheaper to attend a play than to catch a movie at the multiplex or to spend an evening at the bar. Student discounts make it even better for the likes of us. Not only that, but when you leave a play, your eardrums will still be intact.

What puzzles me is that theatre,

and the arts in general, still intimidate some people who are reluctant to attend a play, a symphony or a jazz concert because they don't think they'll "get it." These people think that art can only be enjoyed and appreciated by those with some kind of training in theatre-watching or jazz-music listening. Old Strathcona falls victim to yet another stereotype, and this time, it's taking Edmonton's entire arts scene with it.

What puzzles me is that theatre, and the arts in general, still intimidate some people.

Edmonton's arts scene is unpretentious and accessible, and that's the biggest reason why I love it. I've never felt the need to wear an outfit made by some swanky designer to a play, and I've never felt that other arts patrons at events were sending me a vibe saying, "Ooh, look at me, I'm such an *artiste* and you're nothing but a bum from the unwashed and uneducated masses."

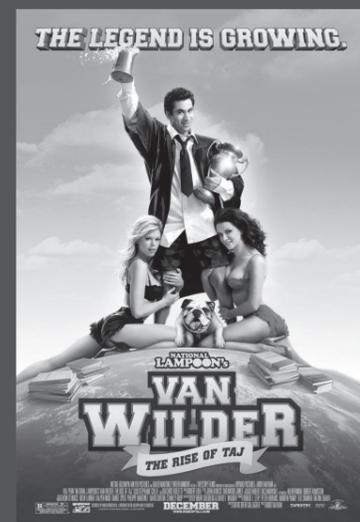
I've met people who're intimidated

by the arts, and similarly, I've met others who feel that they wouldn't "fit" into the arts crowd. These people don't attend plays, concerts or visual arts displays for this reason. However, I would like to assure these people that the arts crowd is as varied and diverse as any other, so newcomers to arts events don't have to worry. They'll fit in just fine.

The arts also have the unfortunate reputation of being stuffy and boring, again deterring many people. The beauty of a city like Edmonton is that everyone can find something that appeals to his or her tastes. The arts scene is no exception. The plays that I've seen in this city, for example, have ranged from edgy and racy to hilarious and laid-back. I've seen timeless classics and I've seen pieces written by local authors. There are many genres from which to choose.

An open mind is the only thing that's essential to enjoying the arts. It allows a person who's new to the arts to overlook the pigeonholing and appreciate the uniqueness and beauty of a work. So if you've felt frightened by the arts in the past, why not try attending something? And hey, if nothing else, it'll definitely beat studying for finals.

free stuff



If you want to see Van Wilder: The Rise of Taj (screens Thursday, 30 November at 7pm at City Centre) come up to 3-04 SUB and claim your double guest pass. First come, first served.

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