

The first, last Albertan pirates

Captain Tractor

With Michael Weston King
Saturday, 17 March at 8pm
Starlite Room

MIKE SMITH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

What do you get when you combine Maritime spirit with prairie ingenuity? No, it's not the fair city of Fort McMurray, but instead local folk rockers Captain Tractor. Fusing Celtic culture with western rural spirit, the Edmonton-based quintet offer fans a unique sound that showcases the multiculturalism our province now enjoys, and their monkier testifies to this fusion.

"We put a bunch of words in one hat that had things about the prairies, and some words in another hat about the ocean," jokes Chris Wynters, the group's lead vocalist. "We didn't get anything good."

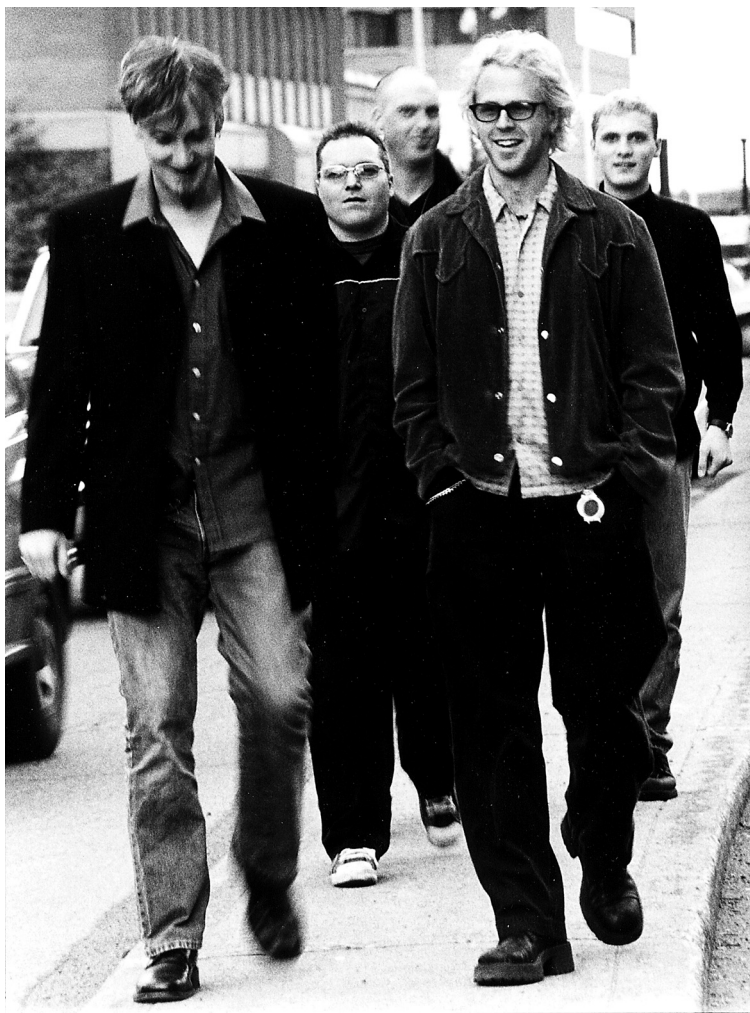
Although the random selection didn't necessarily work, they eventually came up with their moniker using a similar mode of thinking, and *Captain Tractor* was born. And while many drunken revellers at local pubs across the city may best remember them for their quality cover of The Arrogant Worms' "The Last Saskatchewan Pirate," they've also released seven albums over a decade-plus career.

Captain Tractor's many years of experience in Edmonton give them an excellent vantage point for our rising local scene, but not always with enjoyable results. The group felt the loss of the venerated local venue the Sidetrack Café particularly strongly.

"We played the last night of the old Sidetrack before it moved locations," Wynters reminisces. "We were really involved with it, during the middle era, the '90s. Until the end, it was one of the great music venues in Canada."

With the Sidetrack's closure still a fresh memory, he admitted that this city can be a difficult place to make a living as a musician, and emphasized the need for local artists to branch out and tour, even if they want Edmonton to remain their home.

"Captain Tractor probably would've



gone a lot further if we had moved to Toronto at the height of it. But I don't regret that we didn't do that," Wynters says. "Edmonton has been good to us. You can call anywhere your home, but if you are on the road enough, it doesn't really matter where that home is. I think it's really important for Edmonton writers and performers to be out there."

The members of the band took this to heart, and through their years they've enjoyed considerable support, not just locally but also across the country, touring abroad as far as New Zealand. In recent years they've eased off, giving up the frenzied touring schedule to support personal projects and family life. It's little wonder, then, that Wynters is ready to elaborate on the grueling schedule.

"For six years we played over 200 shows a year, across the planet," Wynters says. "We don't plan to get into a van and tour Canada again anytime soon. We all have families now, and houses."

Although the band has shifted to a slower gear, they continue to perform semi-regularly, and they can now focus on playing for the love of their music. Playing on St Patrick's Day for the first time in many years, it should be as exciting for fans as it is for Wynters, who is enjoying the slower schedule.

"For the better part of ten years, Captain Tractor was our main source of income," Wynters explains. "All the shows we play now are fun because they're all shows we want to do. We're not playing Moosejaw for 50 bucks and a case of beer."

A little poetry goes a long way



PAUL
BLINOV

Poetry: you likely know it as either the crap depressed high-school students write or as the bane of your first-year English class. Maybe you write the occasional dirty limerick, impressing your friends with what you can rhyme with "bucket," or have joined a face-book group which claims that haikus are the ultimate devices of hate. You may have even used Spark Notes for Shakespeare, you lazy ass, as does almost everyone else.

Truth is, though, the most poetic that students openly get these days is by putting My Chemical Romance lyrics in their MSN names. As the up-and-coming movers and shakers of the world, we can do better than that. It's a form of expression that's survived from the early Greek societies onwards to the present day. Surely it can find a more prominent place in

our hearts.

Greek thinker Aristotle classified poetry into three rigid genres: epic, tragic or comic. Furthermore, throughout history, poetry was rigidly defined by each culture it was found in—a specific rhyming meter, or deep allusion or particular genre did a good poem make, and few alternatives were acceptable.

But don't let yourself be daunted by these seemingly impossible regulations. Aristotle's been dead for thousands of years, and there isn't anything of him left to turn in his grave should you stray from such rigid definitions. If that sandwich you're munching on tastes pretty good, you've got the basis for a knockout poem.

We're in the age where poetry of all cultures borrows from each other, and free verse is common and accepted, meaning whatever rhythm or level of allusion you wish to write in is perfectly acceptable.

Maybe you'll only find yourself writing when you're feeling sad and lonely. But what about using that written angst as a springboard into love?

If finding a good conversation starter with that attractive girl in your class has been keeping you up at

night, your own written prose is the solution. Should she be an exchange student, write something sweet and slip it to her then use an online translator to put it into her native language! She'll melt into butter and soon be in your arms. A quick tip, though: run the finished translation back through the program to make sure it the grammar holds up, unlike that French project you just put through the translator and just handed in. Nasty grammatical mistakes may ruin the whole thing.

Poetry's a versatile and dynamic form of expression that can save your ass in countless ways. Did you forget about a special date with your steady, or have no cash for a romantic dinner? Poetry can be quick and painless, and stems from the heart, not the wallet. Shouldn't that mean more, anyways? If you're an aspiring songwriter, make sure your lyrics don't suck by giving yourself a little practice away from the guitar.

Canadian poet-musician-legend Leonard Cohen published his first collection of poetry while still in university. It's about time you picked up the pace and started writing down some of those funny feelings you've been having.

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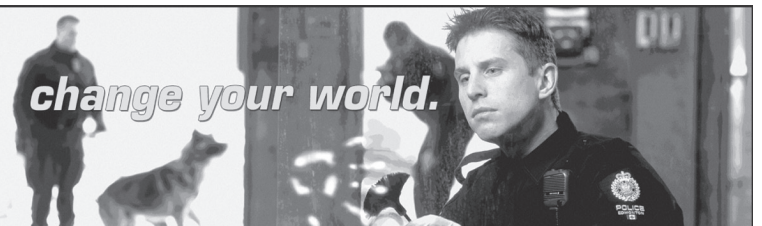
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Comprehensive introductory session Thursday, March 22, 2007.

- 6:30 to 8:30 PM
- At the Mile Zero Dance studio (a.k.a. The Landing Pad)
#201, 10923 - 101 Street (rear entrance, 2nd floor, above Sceppe restaurant)
- Suggested minimum donation of \$2.
- Everyone welcome regardless of gender or knowledge level.
- We meet the third Thursday of each month for follow-up sessions, April through October, 2007, at the same time and location.

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