

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE



K'Naan

Friday, 5 October at 8pm
Winspear Centre

Originally from Mogadishu, Somalia, Toronto-based K'Naan combines political activism with a fusion of hip hop and rap.

He hits the Winspear this week on tour to promote his recently released album *The Dusty Foot on the Road*, and rest assured, no rhyme will be left unslung, no foot left un-Swiffered.

Eamon McGrath and the Wild Dogs

With *The Paperboxes* and *The Pack*
Saturday, 6 October at 8pm
Victory Lounge

Eamon McGrath brings his bluesy folk rock sound and lovable group of Cujos to the Victory Lounge this week to indulge you in some musical rabies, for whom you should be foaming at the mouth and cycling between euphoria and a semi-permanent catatonic delirium. But if the bassist or drummer should start drooling or staggering about, slowly back away and inform concert security; they will drag them out back and take them down, Old Yeller-style.

Becoming Jane

Opens 6 October
Directed by Julian Jarrold
Starring Anne Hathaway and James McAvoy
Garneau Theatre

Anne Hathaway has done a remarkable job over the years typecasting herself into the role of the shy-yet-attractive princess figure, sick of her upscale life and who really has more substance than one would think of someone in that position.

Finally taking on a part that may give her some actual substance, Hathaway stars in this romantic drama about the life and alleged secret romance of legendary writer Jane Austen. While there have already been allegations of historical inaccuracies—a problem rarely, if ever, seen in the period drama genre—the film chronicles Jane's relationship with Tom Lefroy, suspected by some to be Austen's inspiration for the famous Mr Darcy, who in turn was the asshole responsible for Hugh Grant.

I, Claudia

Runs 9-28 October at 7:30pm
Directed by Chris Abraham
Starring Liisa Repo-Martel
Citadel Theatre

The main actress—actually, only actress—in *I, Claudia*, asks, “Ever stare at yourself so hard that your eyes practically start bleeding? I do.”

A one-woman show performed through the swapping of masks, the story focuses on four characters, most prominently Claudia, a prepubescent girl dealing with the stresses of being a young teenager such as self-esteem issues, the divorce of her parents, and, well, puberty.

The play won the Dora Award in Toronto for Best Play in 2001, a testament to the strength of the production and the emotional impact of seeing copious amounts of sanguine blood explode out of the eye sockets of an actor's mask. It could be classified as a “must-see,” though some may find that to be of poor taste.

JOHN KMECH
Break-page champ



Weakerthans' *Reunion* shares local folklore

musicpreview

The Weakerthans

With *The Last Great Chorus*
Wednesday and Thursday, 10-11 October at 7pm
Myer Horowitz

JOHN KMECH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Throughout the greatest hits and watermarks of their past, there has always been something undeniably Canadian about Winnipeg's The Weakerthans—there's some subtle aspect of their musical philosophies in which we in the Great White North can see ourselves. Perhaps it's the haunting-yet-exquisite Prairie imagery of windswept fields of wheat or snowy highways at night trailing off into the horizon. Or it could be the quirky metaphors and amusing anecdotes by which lead singer and songwriter John K Samson shapes his sonic soliloquies.

But even after taking a four-year break, the band hasn't forgotten that the central element for their songs revolve around the emotional resonance found in the quaint tales of average Canadians; after all, the Weakerthans are just average Prairie boys themselves.

“I really hope people—especially Canadians—are able to identify with this record,” Stephen Carroll, the band's guitarist and backing vocalist, remarks over the phone.

That record is *Reunion Tour*, an album “populated by characters,” as Carroll describes it. Recorded at a studio built above a factory on the outskirts of Winnipeg during winter nights, the isolation of the process gets reflected in the record's themes of reunion, reconciliation, and

regret. But the album also features a more story-driven approach than 2003's high-concept album *Reconstruction Site*, while still offering the quartet's signature folk rock sound tinged with punk.

“This was a record we hadn't really known we were going to make. It was created in the studio,” Carroll explains. “With *Reconstruction Site*, we had a structure arranged, and we knew how the trilogy of songs that are the chapter headers would work. For this one, we didn't really have a longer look at it; we just sort of had some songs, some that we'd played and some we hadn't played. We got to the studio with [producer] Ian Blurton, and we just kept saying, ‘Well, what else is there?’”

Plenty, if the diversity of subject matter on the record gives any indication. Ever able to pull the most heartfelt sentiments out of the most mundane of subjects, the band gives common, everyday occurrences an element of mythos, taking tales about a Winnipeg bus driver's forelorn sorrow about an ex, or a dot-com businessman who loses everything, and sculpting them into local folklore.

One piece, “Hymn for a Medical Oddity,” was inspired by the story of fellow Winnipegger David Reimer. A famous case in the lore of psychology, Reimer was sexually reassigned at birth and raised as a girl. After discovering the truth and living several years as a man, he sadly committed suicide in 2004.

“John was asked to do this project by this composer who was writing a musical about David Reimer,” Carroll notes. “John composed a song, and then the composer sort of fell off the map, and we couldn't find him anymore. At some point in the recording process, John mentioned, ‘Here's this piece I wrote; it's kind of weird, but maybe we can make something around it.’”

Alongside tributes to Gump Worsley or poems about Edward Hopper paintings, the guys from The Weakerthans also tackle that classic game

of the north: curling. “Tournament of Hearts” details that most-Canadian of competitions, told fittingly by a band that has had their share of experience hurrying hard.

“We played on my dad's curling team for two years, myself and John,” Carroll says. “We were the worst in the league last year. Somehow we ended up sneaking in through the back door into the playoffs, going on a streak, and being tied for first in the playoffs. We ended up going to a draw-off and unfortunately, their rock ended up closer to the button. But we got second place in the B division.”

With their hometown, down-to-earth mentality rooted in our culture, it may come as a surprise to some that the band has a devout following across the world. But Carroll notes the underlying meanings in their songs are the same for fans everywhere, from Regina to Cologne.

“In our experience, we've been really surprised at how the songs resonate with people. For example, when we play ‘One Great City’ in different towns, with the lyrics ‘I hate Winnipeg,’ people will insert their hometown name and shout it back to us. We've heard ‘I hate Nottingham’ when we were playing in the UK.”

Even with the widespread esteem for their message, the parables of The Weakerthans will always find their foundation in the annals of Canadiana, taking the banal emotions hidden within our contemporary lives and turning them into balladry worth paying attention to.

“We've got songs about curling, Bigfoot sightings in northern Manitoba, a medical surgery making an anomaly of science with a tragic end—just these bizarre stories about Winnipeggers. I hope that people from the Prairies and Canada see themselves represented because I really feel the songs are written about our experiences living there.”



albumreview

The Weakerthans

Reunion Tour
Anti-

JOHN KMECH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

The Weakerthans are one of the precious few bands out there who have the ability to be emotional without being emo, and are skilled enough to be intellectual without sounding pretentious. It's a fine line to walk, and the critically acclaimed band has delivered once again with *Reunion Tour*.

John K Samson, the band's main lyricist and

songwriter, may be one of the finest musical talents of our generation. Samson wields his metaphors so efficiently in the context of his stories that every song is fluid and thought-provoking, such as the declaration that “my face is my mask” in “Elegy to Gump Worsley” or asking the listener to “make me something somebody can use” in “Utilities.”

The rest of the band are no slouches either, matching Samson's vocals with the catchy, riff-driven hooks we've come to expect, along with some progression from their past with an increased use of synthesizers and electronic sounds that actually compliment their straight-ahead rock rather than hinder it.

The most disappointing part about the album is its brevity. Clocking in at 37 minutes, the length is frustrating to fans who have been waiting for four years for more Weakerthans introspection. But if the worst part of an album is that there isn't enough of it, that's also a sign of its overall strength. Every track is solid, none are easily skipped, and the album will enjoy constant rotation through both your headphones and your head—just as we've come to expect from one of the country's most respected bands.