



Emergenza lets bands rock their first steps

The 15-year-old continent-hopping festival beckons untapped local acts

musicpreview

Emergenza Music Festival

Thursday, 17-20 January, 8pm
The Pawn Shop

ELLIOT GOODINE
Arts & Entertainment Writer

"You have to be aware that no one thing is going to make you successful overnight," admits singer-guitarist Sall Gibson from the indie pop-rock band Failing Esther. "But at the same time, these sorts of events allow you to play with a whole other bunch of musicians you'd never have the chance to play with. You get to develop relationships and meet other bands. Even if you don't make it to the top, you're making connections with people within the festival."

The particular festival Gibson has in mind is the Emergenza Music Festival, a four-night competition among independent bands at The Pawn Shop. Emergenza itself was founded 15 years ago in Europe, created expressly to showcase unsigned and undiscovered musical acts.

The bands that make it through the preliminary round will then go on to regional, national, and ultimately

an international final in Germany. But there's no panel of judges in the initial stages; to advance past the preliminaries, the audience will choose the winning band at the end of the night by a show of hands.

"I would like to see the audience choose whoever is honestly the best band to be chosen," Gibson hopes. "Everyone has their own musical taste [...], so at least this way, you've got a larger number of people voting."

Keith Madsen, bassist/vocalist for alt-rock trio Acronycal, agrees that the audience choice is a fair method of picking a winner in these early stages. He's also fairly confident in his untested band's ability to wow a roomful of strangers.

"I think we hold down our songs good enough, and we can stand behind our tunes," he says. "People should be able to judge us upon that."

The winners in later rounds are to be chosen by a panel of judges, which doesn't bother the band, either—really, they're excited to be playing in front of a roomful of people. The Emergenza festival will be Acronycal's first show after recruiting their drummer Jayme Wenzel four months ago.

"If we wanted to put on our own

show together, we'd have to rent and that would cost us even more [than our registration fee]," guitarist Scott Lehman admits.

Both Failing Esther and Acronycal are new bands, and to them, the festival is an important way to get their start in the Edmonton music scene. Acronycal are completely green, while Failing Esther played their first show last weekend.

"I'm really looking forward to the professional sound [provided by Emergenza] and to see what our potential is live," Wenzel says. The drummer also joked about their first-show nerves, saying, "Our first few songs will be a little faster than they should be."

Both bands admit that the Emergenza festival is only part of the strategy to find success as new artists, noting that Internet promotion, touring, and intense rehearsal are all going to be necessary for achieving their long-term goals as respectable artists in town. According to Acronycal, finding success is about "working your ass off."

"We're going to be doing the battle of the bands; we're going to be doing the on-the-road thing, whatever," Lehman says. "We're going to put our feet down wherever we can."



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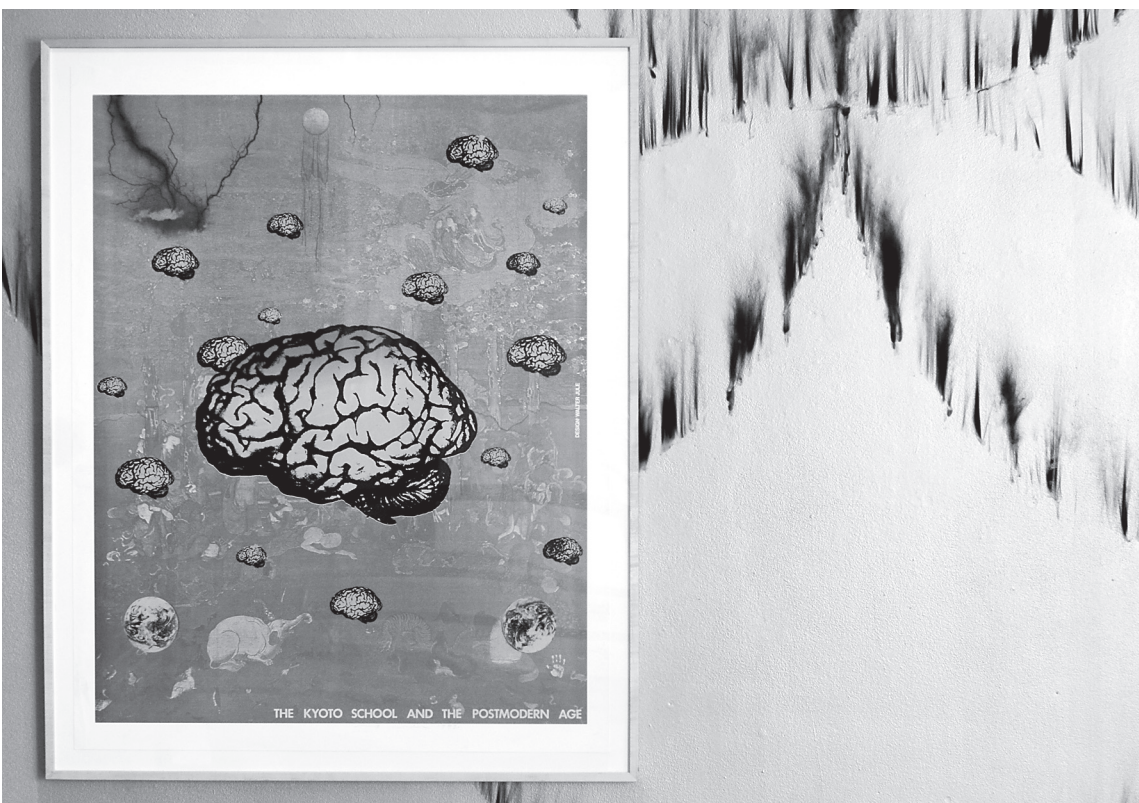
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