



Whale said to have the right stuff

Backed by a fabled blog critic and their hometown alike, Said the Whale are ready to go from obscure to well-known—or at least pay off their bank loan

musicpreview

Said the Whale

With Maurice
Monday, 4 February at 8pm
The Empress (1-9912 82 Avenue)

MATT SCHOETTLE
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Like a battle-hardened and weary faction of soldiers, support on the home front is the most important step towards success for a band. Vancouver's Said the Whale can attest to this aphorism, as the city's fertile independent music scene is allowing the band to come into full bloom.

"We just feel really lucky to have gotten our foot in the door," vocalist and guitarist Tyler Bancroft explains. "At the start, it was just two guys with acoustic guitars, and all of a sudden, we're being welcomed into the scene."

Warm welcomes aside, Bancroft and rest of the band—including fellow co-writer, guitarist, and vocalist Ben Worcester, bassist Jeff Laforge, drummer Spencer Schoening, and keyboardist Laura Smith—give some of the credit to their own sacrifices.

"The first part is that we went out on a limb and got a bank loan. If we hadn't got approved for a bank loan, we wouldn't have been able to do half of the stuff we've done. So that's good, but we're obviously still paying for it. We just decided that if we're going to do it, we might as well do it seriously," Bancroft explains.

Said the Whale's commitment is starting to pay off: in the past year, the band has released the single "This Winter I Retire," which climbed to fifth on CBC Radio 3's R3-30 countdown; an accompanying video directed by, as Bancroft puts it, "indie god" Andy Dixon; the EP *West Coast Christmas*, available for free online; and a full-length CD entitled *Talking Alabonia*, to the acclaim of famed blogger Perez Hilton.

"When we finished the music video, I just sent [Perez] a link," Bancroft says. "He asked for the rest of the album, and a couple weeks later, he came up with a post. In one day, we had a 1000 new MySpace friends requests and like 11 000 plays; all kinds of people were reaching out to us because they had seen us on Perez Hilton."

Mr Hilton, however, can't take all the credit for Said the Whale's success. Vancouver has acted as both an

inexplicable catalyst for the band's music and as a source of inspiration in the songs, according to Bancroft.

"It's impossible not to be influenced by where you live. We've got beaches; we've got mountains; we've got a beautiful city that we love," he says. "It comes very natural to us to be writing songs about our own city because [Vancouver] is so inspirational."

With songs of nautical and naturalistic themes that abound, Vancouver's influence is clear, providing insight into the unique band name itself.

"[Said the Whale] was just Ben and I trying to come up with a cool band that represented the sound we were going for and represented the west coast—a west coast sound," Bancroft adds.

The formula worked; winning the 2007 "Bucky Award" for best new band name of the year on CBC Radio 3—as voted on by the listeners—has Said the Whale excited, even if the award is for their band name and not their music.

"We're just super-stoked to be nominated for that award and that it was voted on by the listeners, which feels good. Even though the award might just be for band name, I know that they liked the music too."

Untraceable shows the worst of Saw, CSI

filmreview

Untraceable

Now Playing
Directed by Gregory Hoblit
Starring Diane Lane and Colin Hanks

JOHN KMECH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Watching ordinary people get lit on fire, roll down hills, or be punched in the face is pretty much the only reason that SpikeTV is on the air and one of the most significant draws for YouTube. While people may enjoy viewing the misery and idiocy of others, however morally dubious that may be, it takes a special brand of stupidity to force you to watch the very depravity you're condemning. *Untraceable* is one such example: it's like the owner of a dog who just soiled the rug—rubbing your face in the excrement, then telling you that you should wash that face.

In what must be the least reassuring view possible for the strength of online security in America, Diane Lane stars as a single mom who, along with poindexter extraordinaire Colin Hanks, comprises what seems to

be the bulk of the FBI cyber-crimes division. Hackers and child predators beware. Whiling away nights online finding Internet-savvy miscreants, Lane discovers a web site called Killwithme.com, where the killer rigs his devices to increase the rate the victim is being killed as more people watch online. Once the serial killer discovers who's after him, it's a race against the clock as Lane attempts to apprehend him before he can get to the people in her life and before the audience is cured of insomnia.

To be fair, the concept behind the movie is solid. There's plenty of material available in the context of our society's voyeuristic tendencies with violence to make an engrossing thriller. But such a film won't be found here.

Rather, *Untraceable* combines the elements of *CSI* and the *Saw* series without the originality of the former or the ballsiness of the latter to produce quite possibly the most boring movie ever made about a serial killer. One of the alluring aspects of such a film is determining the identity of the killer. Here, there's no need to ponder, as the film shows you who it is halfway through. Without saying

too much, it can be assured that he's the Doogie Howser of murderers.

As well, the film lapses into bouts of unintentional hilarity and strained believability that tend to take away from its attempt at a grave tone. Hearing Diane Lane spout continuous technical jargon like "the DNS servers use a low TTL" is ridiculous enough before Colin Hanks joins in the pained attempts at dialogue with "This is just the beginning!" But the winner here has to be the scene where a man being boiled alive in a vat of acid still has the wherewithal to *blink out Morse code* to give the FBI a clue to the killer's motivations.

Director Gregory Hoblit's underlying message becomes more of an annoyance than anything. It's tough to tell an audience that their love of violence is wrong and they're morally corrupt when they've paid \$12 to sit in a theatre and watch your movie melt the flesh off of a human. At least the *Saw* series isn't dishonest in what it's providing.

It's a fairly cunning scheme to make someone pay you to slap them in the face, but that's exactly what *Untraceable* is doing to its audience. Not that they don't need it, but it could at least be less dull and hypocritical in doing so.

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