

Mostly serene musings from the Republic

The Milton, Ontario six-piece's trombonist waxes philosophical about *Population*, pornography, and psychological group dynamics

musicpreview

The Most Serene Republic

With *Whitsundays*
Friday, 4 April at 8pm
Starlite Room

SIMON YACKULIC
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Like their music, members of The Most Serene Republic have deep insights into the human psyche, along with random bursts of colourful artistry that, according to vocalist and tromboner Adrian Jewett, come along with “feeling like hilarious 18-year-old(s).” This carefree sentiment rears its head during the video for “Content Always Was My Favourite Colour,” a track off of their 2005 debut *Underwater Cinematographer*: it features a spontaneous array of lights, illusions, and sounds, opening with a techno laser show set to a momentarily peaceful piano and bizarre cinematic effects—including disembodied heads and clapping hands—rapidly changing colour to the constant drum beat.

But Jewett describes the video and the group's earlier releases in general as almost directionless, in a good way.

“*Underwater Cartographer* was basically done for 100-per-cent fun, done for nobody else except us,” he explains. “*Underwater* is a perfect testament to what you can do when you're not caring about anyone else and you're just doing it. There's no anxiety.”

When he talks about the band's more recent album, *Population*, Jewett takes a moment to pause before thoughtfully describing how the band of six guys and one girl felt pressured to best their previous

albums for the sake of their growing audience. Pressure, it seems, had amplified since their budding days, with the original line up of pianist Ryan Lenssen and Jewett increasing to include guitarists Nick Greaves, Emma Ditchburn, and Sean Woolven, as well as bassist Simon Lukasevich and drummer Tony Nesbitt-Larking.

“Of course, [there are] all these new pressures: how do you follow up? What's this new sound going to be?” Jewett says, adding that his bandmates then took a tough attitude to tackle the new album. “We're just going to have to go for it again, [and] make it more direct.”

A primary subject this post-modern bard found himself addressing was his general concern with the feeling of apathy that he senses has gripped the Western world and overwhelmed the populace.

“Psychology changes in a social group, and that's what we touch down upon: the psychological effects of everything and the one human against,” Jewett explains. “It's such a time of peace, and people can live their lives happily and in bliss—there's no willpower anymore because there's nothing to overcome.”

“It's a very self-destructive thing, this delving for a deeper meaning behind our lives nowadays, because you don't really have to. You can cover it up with whatever you want: you can watch a movie or smoke pot or fill your brain with tons of music on a little device.”

Being the voice crying in the wilderness isn't easy for Jewett. In his search for deeper meaning and truth, he quickly discovered society's dismissive attitude towards independent viewpoints.

“You're just a hyena in a cage full of other hyenas, and you have a sore foot



and you're screaming out, but everyone just keeps on moving along [...] . It's those who have a mental or physical ailment—the broken—that are actually interesting. The ones that are healthy and upright are the ones that are completely oblivious to having any solid opinions or ideals. Instead, they are like a living prototype of a perfect human, and it's scary because it's just there in appearance—they have the success, the phone, the car,

and the house—but if you sit them down and talk to them about what it is to be a human, they'll have no idea, and they'll have no idea how to socialize. They'll just say ‘like’ a lot.”

Despite this worrisome state that has befallen our civilization, Jewett remains ever the optimist.

“As of recently, I've discovered that a lot of things could have happened differently [or] could have been even worse, as far as things go right now.

Like, I could've been born with a shrunken hand or no big toes,” he jokes.

His thoughts on the world aside, Jewett promises an entertaining show. He jokingly promises his band's performance will be filled with “pornography—six cocks and one vagina,” and thoughts of the audience also have him excited.

“They are going to be partying and horny. I can't wait.”

Maher's drowsy debut offers nothing worth waking up for

filmreview

Sleepwalking

Directed by William Maher
Starring Charlize Theron, Nick Stahl, and Annasophia Robb

GARY ALLEN
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Sleepwalking, the directorial debut of visual effects veteran William Maher, feels a bit like a bad dream: dream-like in that the focus of the film seems to switch from moment to moment, and bad in that it never really achieves the desired expression of the story.

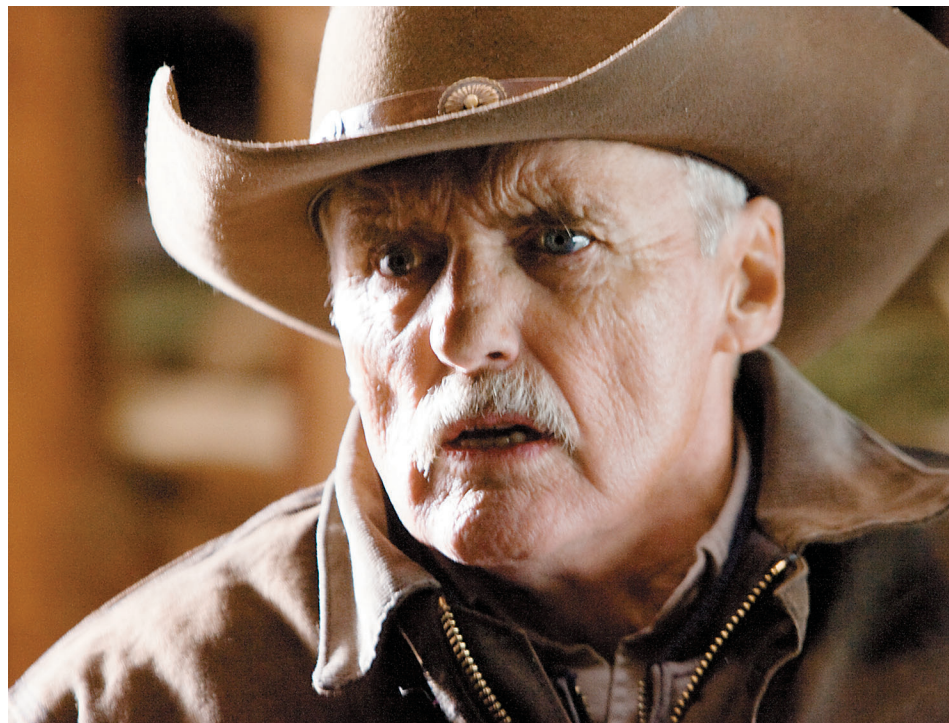
The film starts out feeling like a made-for-TV movie about single mother Joleen (Charlize Theron) and her daughter Tara (Annasophia Robb). Their onscreen banter is highly entertaining, especially from the latter, whose smart mouth is extremely enjoyable. As Joleen is quickly removed from the central storyline, Tara is perennially dumped upon her uncle James (Nick Stahl), who's left to take care of her. But after he loses his job and Tara is forced into a group home, the two go on the run to James

and Joleen's childhood farm, the site of their unhappy upbringing.

From there, the film moves along in a not altogether unenjoyable manner, but Maher never seems to find his style. The camera work in the beginning is far too close, which not only adds to the TV-movie feel but makes it impossible to visually build up the claustrophobia of the later scenes. There are attempts at using mirrors cleverly, but Maher always gives away the reverse angle without any need for contemplation, thereby making the whole exercise feel very amateur. This is, in fact, a theme for the narrative as well, as *Sleepwalking* is far too explanatory, with characters voicing almost every change in emotion without prompt, making many moments throughout the film cringe-worthy.

There's something strangely mechanical about *Sleepwalking*, as if it's going through the motions of filmmaking without actually achieving it. Certainly the story is quite workable, and both Stahl and Robb create characters that are interesting and intriguing, but the film is missing something. Maher just doesn't capture the story on-screen in a way that engages the audience.

The slow pace of the film should lend itself to creating a slow building mood, but Maher



doesn't capitalize on the pace, and it just feels like another hindrance, as there's no big pay-off for the wait. The frequent fade-to-black, which Maher employs all too often, feel like he simply couldn't decide how to end the scene properly. One can argue that he tried to make a brooding, unhappy, slowly paced film in his debut, but since he didn't succeed in making an engaging movie, much of it just feels like an impediment

to getting the story out.

Sleepwalking is a strange film, one that attempts to capture the dynamics of abusive family relationships. While the way in which the story unwinds this premise is somewhat clever—had it been properly translated to the screen, it would have been much more poignant—the film leaves the viewer with little to ponder, other than the ways in which it failed.