

Canadian Music Week shows fresh new talent

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Somewhere during Canadian Music Week, playing at one of the bars and concert halls across Toronto, there was likely the next **Nickelback** or **Broken Social Scene** performing an intimate concert to less than 100 people.

At the week-long celebration of Canada's newest music talent, over 500 acts took to the streets of Toronto to perform in hopes that a label, a manager, or magazine would take notice and give them a shot at the big time.

While genres like jazz, blues and country were represented at CMW, the festival's main focus was rock and roll in all its various forms and shapes.

Over the course of the week, four rock acts stood out as possible future heirs to Canada's rock and roll kingdom, and are surely worth a listen.

Chris Koster has a flamboyant and intense stage presence that is not only unique, but hypnotic and mesmerizing. His voice soars above the crashing of drums and screaming of guitars as he stares with the force of a preacher into the crowd. Wearing a black suit, eyeliner and purple finger nail polish, he already looks the part of a famous rockstar. And soon enough Koster will have his chance at modern rock listeners, and just may prove himself to be one of Canada's finest. Manager Jake Gold, who formerly managed the Tragically Hip and is now appearing as a celebrity judge on Canadian Idol, was in attendance at the Rivoli for Koster's spectacular performance.

The Radical Dudez performed to a laid-back crowd on College West at Rancho Relaxo. Despite starting at 9 p.m. (early by rock and roll standards), the band played hard and impressed the appreciative fans present. The Owen Sound (by way of Kingston) quartet's music is playful and combines loud rock and roll guitars with melodic keyboard lines, all of which highlights lead singer Adam Bell's sensitive voice and heartfelt lyrics.

Republic of Safety, a plucky Toronto group which have proclaimed themselves as their own "nation of rock," were high energy and big on the laughs during their late night set at the Reverb. While the sense that the whole show was one big long "in-joke" with their friends in the audience, Republic of Safety knew how to blast out their fast and furious songs with speed and righteous indignation. Joined at one point by Canadian indie-icon Gentleman Reg, the band's music made for a good time and really showed off an inclusive community atmosphere. During the band's performance, a business card was placed at front woman Maggie MacDonald's feet, so it seems that someone in the industry took notice of their performance.

Fjord Rowboat has been building a name for themselves in Canada's slowly growing shoegaze scene, playing dense rock music that glistens and shimmers. The drums sound like war hammers and the singing sounds like angry sirens, calling eager listeners towards their complex wall of echoes and power chords.

An honourable mention goes to the **Giants of Science**, a band from Australia that came to play an international showcase. I had a chance to catch the band at two in the morning at a packed to the gills Bovine, including a rowdy group of Australians gathered around the stage. Giants of Science were loud and brutal, but fun, like their legendary statesmen, AC/DC. Their accessible brand of hard rock will surely be heard around the globe.

But Canadian Music Week wouldn't be complete if it attendees didn't include a stop into the NeXT concert series, organized by infamous Toronto booker Dan Burke, an ex-Maclean's journalist and one of the city's hottest taste makers. His "anti-North by North East" series has featured acts that blossomed into full-fledged heavy-hitters, including **Death From Above 1979**, **Metric** and **Wolf Parade**.

Burke's series this year, which is not associated with Canadian Music Week in any way, was labelled "NeXT-verses-CMW-and-The-Guy-From-Styx" (a light-natured rib at CMW featured speaker, **Dennis DeYoung**), and continued the tradition of booking absolutely explosive acts at the all night rave club, Comfort Zone.

The Brown Hornets, from Newcastle, Ont., whipped the crowd into a frenzy with their wild blend of blues and rock that sounded like the Who being fronted by Jerry Lee Lewis with a crazed Keith Richards on lead guitar.

Rick of the Skins, an east coast collective known for their album "Here Comes the Weekend," reformed for a special NeXT performance which included East-Coast-music-staple musician Matt

Murphy. Their challenging music brings to mind **Stereolab**, and at times sounded like an East Coast new-wave answer to **Broken Social Scene** and **Black Mountain**.

Canadian Music Week will return to Toronto again next year, and the onslaught of music industry executives, media and performers, will return to celebrate the homegrown music scene. If you plan on attending, don't be afraid to drop in on an unknown performer. Who knows, it could be the next **Bedouin Soundclash** will be playing away.