

Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985-1995. By Michael Barclay, Ian A.D. Jack, and Jason Schneider. Toronto: ECW Press, 2001. xii, 757 p. \$29.95 ISBN 1-55022-475-1

The shelf of books published on Canadian rock music could hardly be described as crowded. Save for a few biographies and historical gems like Martin Melhuish's *Heart of Gold*, Rick Jackson's *Canadian Encyclopedia of Pop Rock & Folk Music* still remains the only reference book we have devoted (somewhat) exclusively to the subject. But now a new title has come along that can be added to that shelf—*Have Not Been The Same: The CanRock Renaissance, 1985-1995*. Given the current climate in Canadian publishing, the mere existence of *Have Not Been The Same* is noteworthy, and with the wave of success Canadian rock and pop groups have been riding of late both at home and internationally, its arrival couldn't be more timely.

Based primarily on interviews with over 150 key artists and bands of the time, the book explores a ten-year period during which, as authors Michael Barclay, Ian Jack, and Jason Schneider aver, the musical seeds sowed by the first wave of great Canadian artists in the 60s and 70s bore an abundant crop of talent and creativity from 1985 to 1995. As music journalists and musicians in their own right, the book's authors know their territory and infuse the proceedings with their insight, knowledge and passion. Barclay, Jack and Schneider make it clear that they are not attempting to write an encyclopedia. Instead they are writing story about the music and the people who made it. In the book's prefatory "Disclaimer," they argue that

what happened to rock music in Canada between 1985 and 1995 was as vital, important, and valid as any music being made anywhere else in the world at that time. *Have Not Been The Same* is a musical panoramic photograph, documenting what took place here and preserving an account for future generations.

The book bypasses the more commercial Canadian artists of the time and instead focuses on a new breed of independent bands that were emerging, like The Spirit of the West, The Rheostatics, 54-40, Eric's Trip, Jane Siberry, and Skinny Puppy. These were the bands that laid a new foundation of Canadian rock by bucking and even rejecting popular music trends and notions. They rediscovered their musical roots, charted their own paths and remained loyal to their unique musical vision. Their ultimate success (and/or failure) was founded upon a do-it-yourself philosophy—a philosophy more akin to the traditions of punk and folk music than the mainstream.

Weighing in at nearly 800 pages, *Have Not Been The Same* (the title is taken from the signature song of the seminal Vancouver band, Slow) is nothing if not exhaustive. Delving deep into the roots of the CanRock renaissance and the Canadian psyche, *HNBS* weaves together diverse musical, artistic, and cultural strands into a rich tapestry that at once shows us where we've been, and where we're

headed. Eschewing a traditional encyclopedic format (with individual entries on bands and musicians), the book is instead divided into seventeen chapters, each tackling a different subject and including a lively selection of quotations, lyrics, reminiscences, and commentary from a cross-section of musical points of view.

The book opens with a survey of the Canadian musical and cultural landscape in 1985 in a chapter titled "Everyone Knows This Is Nowhere." Peter C. Newman, The Cowboy Junkies, Blue Rodeo, Stompin' Tom Connors, Sarah McLachlan, Kurt Swinghammer and Toronto filmmaker Bruce MacDonald (among others) all weigh in with their thoughts. The authors themselves aren't above poking at a few sacred cows either. Bemoaning the music scene and "[t]he dismal lack of Canadian celebrity circa 1985," they pinpoint the Ethiopian famine relief single "Tears Are Not Enough" by Northern Lights as the nadir. From there, *HNBTs* takes the reader on a musical odyssey that explores development and growth of the CanRock renaissance over time from a variety of angles: from the importance of MuchMusic, campus radio and the CBC in introducing a new crop of musical talent, to the emergence of independent record labels like Montreal's Og Records; from the punk music scenes of Vancouver and Toronto, to Hamilton's homegrown superstar producer Daniel Lanois and the enduring legacy of Neil Young and Crazy Horse; from the re-introduction and re-vitalization of folk

and country music, to the Halifax underground and Vancouver's Nettwerk Records. Separate chapters are devoted exclusively to the bands Sloan, Blue Rodeo, and The Tragically Hip, respectively.

ECW Press has produced a high quality book that will appeal to a wide audience. *HNBTs* is generously illustrated throughout with clear black-and-white photographs, and includes a centre spread of sixteen pages of colour photos of musicians and bands. But though its scope is broad, that's not to say the book will satisfy every reader. The authors make no bones about subjective choice being paramount in deciding who was and was not included, as they themselves admit—"[e]very person who reads this book is bound to ask, 'Yeah, but what about...?'"

After reading *HNBTs* readers will likely come away with a new appreciation and understanding of arguably one of the most fascinating and least understood eras in Canadian music. Even if all that the book accomplishes is merely to draw someone's attention to a previously unheard of band or musician (like Edmonton's *Jr. Gone Wild* in the case of this reviewer), it will have succeeded in its mission. All that is missing from the book is a companion CD set. Perhaps that is something to consider for future editions.

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