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OTTAWA EVENT REVIEW: SMITH'S FALLS SHINDIG (TWEED)

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This year's annual Smith's Falls Shindig took place on Saturday August 24th. This was my second consecutive year taking in this unique festival, and it was a great time once again. The festival is basically offered as a "thank you" to the Smith's Falls community, and as such, is for its residents, and only \$15 for non-residents. The main draw at Tweed is the concert line-up. It's an incredible opportunity to take in a lot of fantastic shows and to discover new and exciting artists, at an unbeatable price. The music genres are varied, incorporating many types of music, with something that will appeal to everyone. Gates open at 1pm, and the concerts kick off almost immediately, running right until 11pm, so it can be a long day for anyone hoping to see it all.

In addition to the stage area, you can find a kid zone, with all kinds of unique bouncy structures, including a dodgeball court, crazy slide and a basketball game. There are many different food trucks on site for grabbing lunch and supper, including Angry Dragonz, Big D's Dog House, Sula Wok and Stella Luna. But really, people are there for the music, so as I did last year, I'll give a quick and dirty review on the concerts. Although there wasn't a huge headliner to rival last year's Snoop Dogg show, the final three bands drew quite a crowd!

• Five + None

Like many of the bands at the Shindig, this one was new to me. The members of this group are quite young; all of them clearly in their mid-teen years, but what they lack in time on this earth, they make up for with big sound. Each member has mastered their respective instrument, and as a group, they are fantastic. Their genre is rock, but also has a bit of a soul feel at times. The lead singer, Maryn, was outstanding on Saturday, has an incredible range, and appears to be able to pull off any style of singing. I could picture her perfectly singing Aretha Franklin songs. I also really enjoyed the baseline for many of their songs. The bass player, Kenny Hammond, was incredible and really stood out to me!! Career Potential: Unlimited. Their ambition and desire to succeed will be their biggest hurdle, but I see this band going a long way. There's a whole lot of talent in this group and I hope to see them again in the coming years. They're listed in the Cityfolk Marvest line up, so that's a great start!

• Slim Moore

Slim was at the Shindig last year, and I won't go back and read what I wrote for him, as I assume it's going to be identical. He is very entertaining with his mix of soul, jazz, and reggae music. He has a stage presence that's very calming, yet draws excitement as well. He clearly gives it his all in a relaxed, iconically Jamaican form. I really loved the song "Smile Jamaica". Career Potential: Realized. After two years at the Shindig, and from what I can remember, little change in his show, he seems to have plateaued and is content with his career status as a musician. There's no question that he's talented, and a great performer. I suspect that he's achieved what he wants to achieve and is happy with what he's accomplished. I think he was great, and I'm going to get his album for sure. I hope to see him again.

• Loon Choir

Loon Choir was also new to me, and I didn't really know what to expect, especially with that name. Often when I look at the members of a group, I try to guess what they may sound like and who they are influenced by. Loon Choir was interesting to say the least. I feel like this is how Arcade Fire must have started up before they made it to the big leagues. I say that because this band sounds and acts just like them, and I thought of them immediately, due to both sound, and random actions on a busy stage. Loon Choir was a really fun and energetic group, but seem more like a bunch of friends having a party and jamming together in their back yard or garage. There is no question that they are musically inclined, but they just don't stand out as being special. Like Arcade Fire, they exhibit great showmanship on stage, but in Loon Choir's case, it's not entertaining, it's like they're trying to distract the audience from the music. Examples are the lead singer crawling around on the stage and spinning around in unusual ways (as opposed to the "usual" spinning around). Although all musically talented, the violinist stood out to me (I didn't catch her name) and deserves a shout out for her extraordinary ability; I think she'd be great on her own without the distractions of the lead singer. Career Potential: Realized. As mentioned, they do have talent, but if they stay together as they are, being an opening band at a small town festival is about as far as I see them going. Perhaps individually, they will achieve more, but from what I saw, that's it.

• Basic White

Basic White was another fun band to try figure out in terms of genre. Each of the members looked like a hard rocker, with the long hair and look and feel of a metal band member. I figured them to be some sort of grunge rock-like combination of Green Day and Weezer. I was wrong....I think. I don't really know what they were as it was hard to really pinpoint a specific genre of music so let's just simplify and call it rock music. There was one group of guys in the audience who sang along with every song, but aside from that group, there were only a few signs of gentle head bobbing and quiet applause. I found my mind drifting often while they were performing, with one exception. "Way Up" was a really fun song, and it grabbed my attention back from watching the bouncy castles and held it for the duration of the song. It was well written, well performed and had some slight audience participation throughout, whether intentional or not. Career Potential: Rising. I feel as though this band will never be a headliner, but they can definitely fit in as an opening act almost anywhere. I can see them on stage in a larger concert space like Barrymores. They do have a lot of skill, and with a few more stand-out songs, they could be reasonably successful.

• "Julia" – The Beatboxer

I don't know if Julia has an official performer name, as she wasn't listed in the program, and appeared to take the place of the DJ who normally played between acts. Despite not being an officially listed concert at this festival, she was one of the highlights for me. I respect the art of beatboxing and loved doing it myself when younger (and even now when I'm alone). Creating sound effects with your mouth and throat is an unappreciated and underestimated talent. Often when people think of beat boxing, they think of the traditional Run DMC, or late 80s rap, but Julia is far from a traditional beatboxer; she creates sound effects for songs that you'll know, while adding the beat, and even lyrics in some cases. This is not easy! My first 'wow' moment for this 'new-age beatboxing' (if you will) is when I discovered "Beardyman" and "Nathan Flutebox Lee" in the semi-popular YouTube clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfXaL9omQPs>) when they performed at a Google function. (check it out on Youtube, it's worth the 18 minutes of your time). I figured that Beardyman was one of the best in the world, but it seems that Julia is his equal, if not even better. She performed three different songs, each of which was more brilliant than the previous finishing with a beatboxing session into her harmonica. Career Potential: Undefined. It's tough to fit this type of performance into a defined category. I'm not even sure that she'd be able to have long solo performances, so I believe that although crazy talented, she'll struggle for gigs as it's not likely she can perform for extended periods of time, as it is likely very taxing on your mouth/throat. If she does get long shows, I know I'll go see them!

• Last Drop Orchestra

Apparently Last Drop Orchestra was at the Shindig last year, but I don't remember them at all. I don't think I'll remember them by this time next week either. This is a group of musicians that have probably played for a couple of decades (I'm being generous) together and have a fantastic time doing so. They are all very capable musicians; there's no question they're good at what they do, but they're just kinda boring. Right after they started their set, multiple women came up to the stage with their phones out to record the show; all these giggly women had huge smiles on their faces like they'd been anticipating this "boy band" for years. They loved every song and the smiles never faded. I thought to myself, maybe I've misjudged this band and they're better than I give them credit for. Then I saw that each of these superfan women had an "artist" pass dangling around their necks. So I'll stick with my initial reaction and say that this is a typical band who excel at playing music for their family and friends. Due to their size and the quality of their instruments, they're probably more sophisticated than a legion band, but maybe not. The fans they draw are comparable to the demographic of a typical evening legion patron. Overall, Last Drop Orchestra's music is decent, but didn't really hold my attention very long. They appear to be a mix of CCR, Neil Young, and I got a sense of Tommy Tutone ("Jenny" – 8675309) in one of their songs. If you like the classics, and you want a good toe-tappin' time, this band is for you. Career Potential: Realized. These older performers could sell out the biggest legion in town.

• Jonathan Emile

Let's just start this one off with the fact that I love reggae music, and can appreciate a good reggae artist when I see one. Jonathan was great!! He sang all his own reggae music (except for one song "No Woman, No Cry"), and that says a lot! Many reggae concerts will be about half Bob Marley songs, the other half: originals. This was not the case for Jonathan. His stage was full with back up singers and musicians, and a baritone sax to Emile's left, which was a real treat. I really have no comments to make other than the fact that he was exceptional and is a fantastic performer to watch and listen to. Career Potential: Rising. I think there's a good market for decent reggae music, and with the right amount of ambition and hard work, I think Jonathan can move up in the world. Hailing from Montreal, and willing to travel, I believe that endless opportunities await him if he makes the effort to seek them out.

• Shay Lia

Shay Lia is very easy to define and describe; she's a brilliant soul and R&B singer. She is without question the most talented singer that hit the stage at the Shindig this past weekend. She was alone on stage with only a DJ to play the back-tracks to her music. She performed a great set, sending her soul-infused music rolling across the audience. It was incredible, and my only issue with this concert is that the Smith's Falls Shindig didn't really time her performance in the best way. Having a reggae show before, and a high paced concert immediately after, Lia's concert may have been a poor scheduling decision. It just like a strange time to have this type of act. Regardless though, she was phenomenal. Career Potential: Rising. Shay is a natural singer and can rise to whatever she wants to be. Although not my favourite type of music, I was really impressed with her skills.

• Elijah Woods + Jamie Fine

I'm embarrassed to admit that I've never seen these two before, considering the number of times they've performed in Ottawa over the past few years. I had heard many great things and am happy to have finally experienced their show, because what a show it was! Jamie Fine makes it an experience. Her extremely high energy antics on stage are amazing, and compare only to her singing ability. With multiple excursions off stage into the pit area to greet the crowd and continuous rushing around, she held the attention of the entire audience without fail. It was a ton of fun; my only complaint is that thirty minutes is not enough! Career Potential: Rising. Despite a host of shows and regular performances, I feel as though they can go further. They are so much fun, and their music is as enjoyable to listen to as they are to watch perform it. Love them!

• Hollerado

This is a band that's hard to really say too much about as many people already know them well. Live 88.5 have been playing their songs for years, and again with only a half hour set, they were able to fit in all their major releases and little else. But that made for a high energy and exciting show! The crowd just ate it up, singing and dancing to each of the hits. Hollerado took "audience participation" to a new level: they pulled a guy out of the audience and brought him on stage and let him play their guitar to "Juliette", one of their most popular songs. Further, they invited the lead singer from "Basic White" to sing with them for a bit. It was a big party on the stage, and just so much fun!! This seemed like one of the fastest concerts I've ever been to, and not only because it was 30 minutes long. Career Potential: Realized. I say this only because Hollerado announced that this is sadly their last year as a band, and they plan on retiring at the end of 2019. Otherwise, I think this band is amazing and could easily top the alt rock charts for years to come!

• Bahamas

There's really only one way to describe the music from the Bahamas....CHILL. Close your eyes for minute, and picture yourself on a quiet beach down south. The breeze is blowing, and there's some soft relaxing music playing in the background....that's Bahamas!! Although they wouldn't be my choice for a headlining/closing act for a music festival, they are fantastic. I absolutely love the calm, chill, coffee-house, relaxed music, and listen that genre all the time, when I'm writing especially. It was so great! Career Potential: Realized. Although very, very good at what they do, it's not a genre of music that really has a lot of growth potential. They're never going to draw 10,000 people or sell a million albums. They have achieved what they will achieve in my opinion. Not to take anything away from them though, I really did enjoy their show! It was nice to hear them for a full hour too; they were the only band to get more than 30 minutes for the whole festival. Well deserved...what a treat!!

I very much look forward to the event next year. As mentioned at the beginning of this review, it's just such a pleasure to discover new bands, and at only 30 minutes each, there's really no risk!!



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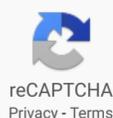
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