

North Vancouver Band Rocks Two Continents

by SG Lee

It's 10:30 pm on a Monday night at Vancouver's Buffalo Club. Skateboarders are whizzing up and down the indoor ramp while a crowd gathers around the stage. Shouting for the band starts up as the crowd packs in ever tighter. At last, the club's MC appears and introduces the band. As four mop-haired boys take the stage, the crowd shrieks and jumps with delight. The Sessions, fresh from their win at the Emergenza festival in Germany, are ready to rock the house.

Josh Abel (vocals), Tobias Jesso (bass), Martin Kay (drums) and Tristan Martin (guitar) are four young musicians who are making a big splash in the indie music scene. They haven't been together long as a band, even though they all grew up on the North Shore, but they've clicked personally and musically, and they're taking on the world.

The band's original songs, featuring lyrics like, "Your heart is stone to everyone/

But you're not so cold unless you are around/ Around, around, around, around/ Pleased to meet you," give us a contemporary take on the traditional rock and roll landscape of young love, passion and alienation.

This music is built for dancing - proved by the crowd at the Buffalo Club. Not only is the Sessions' look (shaggy hair, tight pants, sneakers) reminiscent of British bands of the eighties, it can be heard in their pop-rock tunes. Not surprisingly, their list of influences includes David Bowie, the Clash and the Strokes, along with Franz Ferdinand, to whom they are often musically compared.

In August these four young, very talented men beat out thousands of bands from all over the world to take first place at Emergenza, an influential international battle of the bands - the first North American band to win the 2006 event which drew more than 7000 entrants.

The path to first place saw The Sessions go from entering the local contest at Tom Lee music when the band was only a few months old, to winning first in Vancouver, then at the Western Canadian finals in Calgary, and then at the Canadian finals in Montreal to become the sole Canadian entry among the twenty finalists in Rothenburg. One German reviewer described their win there: "Their technique, passion and originality impressed the jury, the public and even the other bands, who celebrated with them on the Main stage."

Winning Emergenza sends the boys on a paid U.S. tour, gets them the chance to record an album in Sweden and sponsors them for gigs at various trade showcases, as well as putting a customized guitar and bass in their hands. All this on top of getting to perform for a crowd of 25,000 at the concert finale in Germany.

How do these Canadian kids who seem poised for international stardom react to their victory? On their website, the guys say, "We met some amazing people and made some great friends over there, like The Echoes from Dallas, Texas. Their show is the epitome of rock n roll, something like The Doors and reminiscent of the 70s in general."

Modest they may be - but with this kind of success, can a recording contract be far away, given that one of their managers is Susan Rock, sister of record producer Bob Rock (Metallica, Our Lady Peace, Tragically Hip)?

Listen to The Sessions and check out their performance schedule @ www.myspace.com/thesessionsmusic.

