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Young, alienated anxious to move up

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

One thing you can say about HOLLi, they're not sellouts.

In fact the local band sold the fewest tickets to the recent Secondary Press Battle of the Bands — not surprising since they hail from the smallest community that was represented at Hamilton's Ballroom bash.

They enjoyed the least hometown fan support and probably the least popular time slot, first on the eight-band card, but nearly grabbed the most votes for the \$1,000 grand prize.

HOLLi's half-hour performance rated a whopping 91.5 per cent on the judges' charts, a mere one point less than a more recognized, more mainstream ensemble from Burlington.

Thus marks another chapter in the always-the-bridesmaid-never-the-bride saga that's seemed to follow the Milton-area group since their inception.

They've placed second on more than one occasion and the times they have topped the competition — certainly not rare either — they've failed to make headlines or even get their pictures in the paper.

"I can't believe (last-place) Jensen got in and we didn't. What are we ugly or something?" questioned 19-year-old singer/rhythm guitarist Mike Rush of Georgetown, regarding media coverage of the recent event.

HOLLi's newest member — dreadlocks-sporting Milton bassist Ryan Clark, 19 — suggests this underdog aura isn't all bad, particularly since it's what gave them a name.

He explained, "We're named after that dog who was dragged behind the car by its owner. Sometimes we feel like that underdog who gets kicked around a lot."

Both Mr. Clark and Mr. Rush joined HOLLi last year after stints with fellow north Halton rockers Drowning June.

Twenty-one-year-old Miltonian Elliott "Elmer" Marshall — who keeps the beat — and Acton lead guitarist Rory Pratt, also 21, comprise the foundation of what they describe as a 'neo-pop super metal' band.

The two met in grade 10 history class at Bishop Reding high and it wasn't long before they starting meeting for jam sessions in their garages or back sheds.

"What I remember most is how fun those first few practices were," recalled Mr. Marshall, perhaps the most musically talented of the foursome. In addition to the drums, he has an aptitude for organ, saxophone and guitar playing.

Mr. Rush said it's only now, with Ryan Clark thrown into the mix, that HOLLi is truly complete.

Pointing to his bandmate's charismatic demeanor and attention-grabbing appearance, he quipped, "Ryan's our marketing tool. Before we had the Coke, all we needed was the bottle."

Humour is something HOLLi has in ample supply. Their on-stage hi jinx include cross-dressing and bawdy joking-telling. Once Rush — overcome in the middle of Take Your Clothes Off — even did a partial striptease.

"It wasn't anything too bad, I kept my underwear on. I get so happy when I hear those cheers that I'll do things without thinking," he said.

"But that's the kind of cheap thing that wins you battle of the bands shows."

For all their joking and light-hearted antics, HOLLi members are very serious about their music — enjoying a commitment they feel is quite rare among club bands.

"I'm all for every kid picking up a guitar and learning how to play, but there's a lot of bands who go into it half way," said Mr. Clark. "It's like the Kiss song says, 'you've got to put your faith in a loud guitar.'"

Subscribing to this ideology, HOLLi has spent the last two years polishing their sound and building their repertoire. Take Your Clothes off and Should Have Been A Criminal are among their more recognized tunes — the latter born from Mr. Pratt's couch-potato imagination.

"It's not really inspired from anything. I just thought of it while watching TV. I watch a lot of TV," said Mr. Pratt.

Their hard-charging sound has been showcased throughout Halton and at a number of popular Toronto clubs like the Opera House and Horseshoe Tavern.

While these gigs hold the most room for exposure and profit, not to mention opportunities like opening for Q107 Home Grown winners Super Garage, HOLLi would like to become a more regular attraction for their young fans in Milton.

"A lot of kids know us because it's such a small town but we really haven't done a lot of all ages shows in the area," said Mr. Clark. "We'd love to play that type of concert here, whether it be just us or together with other area bands."

"We could have like a love, peace festival in the summer or something."

Local teens may not have to wait that long, as HOLLi is rumoured to be a late addition to this month's Battle of the Bands lineup at Bishop Reding.

From there they'll jam at Oakville's Coronation Park in early summer during the annual Waterfront Festival.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton-area rock band HOLLi took second recently at the prestigious SP Battle of the Bands in Hamilton. Group members include (clockwise from bottom) Elliott Marshall, Rory Pratt, Mike Rush and Ryan Clark.

Award nominators say firms go the extra mile

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
Special to The Champion

Whether it be improving your financial position, driving skills or social life, the 1997 crop of Business of the Year nominees take quality service to a whole new level.

And that's why they're all up for the Chamber of Commerce's coveted award.

Safeguarding Milton's money for almost half a century, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce offers a full range of financial services to both individuals and businesses.

Growing with the community since the 1950s, they've expanded to two Main Street locations and now have a branch that caters solely to small business service.

As acting branch manager Sue Harrison puts it, "The key is trusted financial advice. I regularly hear from clients how committed and experienced our staff are."

She's quick to point out that former local manager Ren Siblock — a nominee for Business Person of the Year — is largely responsible for CIBC's success.

Over the years the financial institution has taken on numerous volunteer projects. Employees have actively supported the United Way, Milton District Hospital's Hike for Health, the Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Achievement Program.

"Should another candidate be considered for the Business of the Year, it would be just as appropriate to consider CIBC," wrote its nominator. "Many of the staff

are, as individuals, dedicated members of the variety of volunteer organizations, each contributing in many ways to this community."

When its former owner decided to pursue other interests, Wheels Driver Training instructor Keith Black rallied the troops and kept the business afloat — often without remuneration to himself and at no cost to the drivers enrolled at the time.

That's how one of his biggest supporters recalls the company's 1994 turning point, which has prompted her to write a glowing report of the Wheels' program.

For his part, Mr. Black says his business' mission statement is simply to inspired joy of life-long safe driving.

"The nomination is totally out of the blue," Mr. Black remarked. "I'm walking on air."

Wheels offers both road and in-class driver training. They have recently initiated an annual student graduating award program and cater to the hearing impaired.

Adds Wheels' nominator, "This foresight is one example of the heart and dedication of this most vital service to our community."

An intricate part of the community for the past 18 years, the Dickens Restaurant offers good eats and good times.

A household name among local sports circles, the English-style pub and its staff "should be commended for the excellent professional services they offer their customers", according to their nominator.

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Cops warn some ads are bogus

The Ontario Provincial Police are warning the public about recently advertised get-rich-quick schemes.

Certain classified ads under Help Wanted or Business Opportunities columns and computer e-mail messages — promising big money while working at home — require one-time payments of \$20 to \$35 to cover enrolment in the program.

However, after paying the fee, the person may not receive any materials or further correspondence from the company.

In other cases, an explanation is received on how to

duplicate the procedure to involve other people.

OPP state that while the company's return mailing address may appear proper, it is usually just a numbered postal mailbox.

"Persons considering responding to these ads should carefully consider whether the offer sounds too good to believe and should approach with caution," said OPP Inspector Harold Rose.

To log a complaint about a misleading advertisement, call the Better Business Bureau at (416) 766-5744 or Industry Canada at 1-800-348-5358.