

FIMAV, VICTORIAVILLE QC, MAY 19

By Eric Hill
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Tyshawn Sorey Trio



Tyshawn Sorey Trio | Photo: Martin Morissette

It could be festival fatigue messing with the senses, but drummer Tyshan Soren repeatedly pulled off the same subtle trick: biding time through long passages where his trio seemed to be barely pushing aside the silence, then, when almost nothing was happening, suddenly everything was happening.

Were you to wander into the room uninformed, you might have assumed that pianist Corey Smythe was the bandleader, so generous is Sorey's direction and score to afford his band member such space for expression. For their part Sorey and bassist Chris Tordini coloured at the edges of the themes until, like a fully charged battery, whooom, nothing met everything, again.

Sorey's compositions were complex and rewarding on several different levels of consideration. Meanwhile, his play was multivalent, yet free from empty pyrotechnics, instead putting every spare kilowatt of charge fully in service of his music.

Xavier Garcia / Lionel Marchetti

French duo Xavier Garcia and Lionel Marchetti were given a special setup on a small, raised stage surrounded by the audience on all sides. They performed their sound art wizardry like a couple of close-up of magicians, but even at ten feet away, it remained difficult to fully grasp which gesture with what object modified by which knob twist resulted in what sound.

The centrepiece of Marchetti's work is a well-worn vintage reel-to-reel setup with a tape loop. With a wide array of contact microphones at his disposal, he captured, and looped, the sounds of everything from plastic bottles to power drills, feverishly working each choice of level and layer.



Xavier Garcia / Lionel Marchetti | Photo: Martin Morissette

Garcia's craft was more modernist, with laptop, sampling keyboard and a variety of pads, he spent most of the show developing and refining sounds of his own devising, plus the live input from Marchetti's feed.

For an hour, they traded clicks, pops, and spewed forth cavernous sound, describing all manner of alien landscapes. Like the most skilled improvisers, their interplay showed a stellar sensitivity to texture and space, plus a great ability to listen and react. In a style of art where it is all too easy to rely on chance and noise, the duo's skill in forging something both emotional and intellectually engaging was truly amazing.

Joane Héту

As a musician, organizer, label boss and all-around local hero for decades, Joane Héту has a deep, deep Rolodex. The contact list came in handy, as she assembled a 20-piece vocal choir at FIMAV.

Composed and conducted by Héту, alongside Danielle Palardy Roger and Jean Derome, *Joker* was part dramatic presentation, part group exercise, and perhaps the most artistic game of Simon Says ever.



Joane Héту | Photo: Martin Morissette

With participants in costume, and some "ringers" like Lori Freedman and Alexandre St. Ongearmed with musical instruments, the principals directed the group in several rounds of glossolalia and controlled outbursts. There was an air of city council meeting gone wrong.

Eventually aided by occasional explanatory lyrics in French and English, the core tale came into soft focus. Something about fireflies and the light between heaven and hell. It was very soft focus, but the verve with which the participants played out their parts carried the show. But questions about the semiotics of wearing stripes, polka dots and yellow accessories remain for a future instalment to explain.

Senyawa / Keiji Haino

As an undeniable force of nature, one of Keiji Haino's innate abilities is not necessarily to play with others. He thrives in situations where volume and chaos reign, which is why it was such a great surprise to hear his collaboration with Indonesian duo Senyawa.

Concentrating primarily on percussive and/or loud cross-frequency accompaniment via guitar and Theremin, Haino locked easily into the duo's vibe, which combines culturally specific sounds and rituals with a badass metal attitude. That blend was perfect for Haino, who traded vocal eruptions with singer Rully Shabara. Meanwhile instrumentalist and inventor Wukir Suryadi set up all the beautiful and terrifying sounds for the other two to knock down, artfully.



Senyawa / Keiji Haino | Photo: Martin Morissette

With a shared display of respect and enjoyment, apocalyptic rock has never been so sweet.

The Ex

So how does a punk band last 40 years and not lapse into self-parody? Here is a partial list.

By showing punk is not anti-intellectual.

By proving that punk can not be xenophobic.

By making a lot of space for art in punk.

By having a drummer (Katerina Bornefeld) who is so fucking amazing, she renders having a bass player unnecessary.

By not having a bass player, but three guitarists instead.

By loving and playing Ethiopian songs.

By spawning a (highly respectful) mosh pit at a festival where 70-and 80-year-old jazz musicians just played.

By asking for more light.

By being the Ex.

Proudly your parents', your grandparents' and maybe soon your children's and your grandchildren's punk band. And yours. Long live.



The Ex | Photo: Martin Morissette

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