

THE STITCHING OF TEPER'S RONSTER

AN ADVENTURE INTO RONLEY TEPER'S
LABORATORY OF FARTS (FUSED ARTS)

BY: MARC O'BRIEN

Try to remember the times you peed your pants in public but felt way too satisfied to feel embarrassed. Those times when your parents may have questioned their genetics as they gazed upon the euphoria of their ninetee—err—four-year old clutching their groin and singing a song of relief to a sensual melody of ammonia and saturated overalls. Eerily familiar isn't it? So with excretion in mind, I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say it's those happy accidents that make life worth living. Well, on September 13th, a few of us from SC Magazine pretty well pissed our pants.

"Ronley made me feel like a dirty child watching sexy tiger people making beautiful music."

Photo: Ali Eisner



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It was fate that brought us to the Piston that night to experience the frenzy that is singer/songwriter Ronley Teper and her gang of musicians, dancers, video artists and puppeteers. We didn't plan to be there, but what we stumbled upon definitely made us moist. If you were to breed Peewee Herman with Sherry Lewis (or lamb chop herself) and squeeze the baby through the mail slot of Fred Penner and Tom Waits, who took it upon themselves to raise the baby as their own (as they had been having trouble conceiving), you would likely be left with miss Ronley Teper.... although I'm pretty convinced that's what actually happened.

The show itself marked the Canadian release of Ronley's live recorded album ALIVE, performed exactly one year ago that night and on that very spot. The meticulous timing only accentuated the otherworldly feeling of this somewhat shamanistic sing-along. In moments, I half expected the circle of glittery masquerading bodies that our host had seemingly spellbound, to summon the spirit of polkaroo right in front of our minds' eyes. I know, the allusions to clubhouse-style musical children's programs from the 80's and 90's is getting redundant, but quite honestly, Ronley Teper's performance made me feel like a dirty child watching a group of sexy tiger people making beautiful music.

What I witnessed through the gaps of my appalled mother's fingers was something I was definitely not expecting. The band alone was impressive; a group of sixteen musicians (see list), among whom, were some of Toronto's finest, all contributing disparate musical aesthetics to power up our energetic host. But even as Ronley cycled through her many influences (folk, funk, bluegrass, pop etc.), the atmosphere was never lost. In fact, it was the inconsistency of the performance that galvanized every fragmented genre to become such a perfect monstrosity.

And that's just what it sounded like...

One of our favourite things about the show was Ronley's digital theatre. To the right of the stage was a bright and colourful hole in the wall in which weird and happy things performed a ballet of love and harrassment. As the silhouettes of whales and other creatures cast their shadows on a beautiful animated world created by Eileen Jerrett, projection master Peter O'Neill stepped back and made them all infinitely self-reflective. I thought all this was enough. I already couldn't tame my smile, but Ronley ripped my cheeks open when she jumped in front of her screen to teach us all the words she could think of with the suffix -ate by use of her song "Emancipate". And then it was time to party. With a few commanding howls from Ronley, her minions burst into the audience and dragged as many initially reluctant spectators they could into a fit of dancing below Ronley's psychedelic light cape. It was totally badass.

MUSICIANS

Stacey Mcleod - saw	Scott Maynard - electric bass
Joan Besen - piano	Chris Banks - upright bass
Roman Tome - drums/percussion	Willow Rutherford - accordion
Reade Olivier - drums (second night)	Caleb Hamilton - trumpet
Tim Posgate - banjo	Ben Bowen - trumpet
Jaron Freeman Fox - violin	Beth Washburn - mini tuba
Christine Bougie - lap steel/electric guitar	Aly Livingston - flute
Nick Taylor - electric guitar	Josh Van Tassel - samplers

ACTORS/DANCERS

Adriana Disman
Leah Goldstein
Sophie Grapes
James Kendall



Photo: Ali Eisner

You really don't see many performances of this artistic calibre put together in such small venues and for so little money, but man did we appreciate the intimacy. Ronley Teper has the uncanny ability to give you a little hope and then give you the shivers. Her music is picturesque and her voice is funky. It is probably something I won't forget for a long time. What I do suggest to you, reader is that you seek her out and see for yourself (especially if you go to art school). Even if you forget her name or never buy her album (which is available online) if, in the future, you leave a show feeling like someone sprinkled something in your drink, but that something was a handful of skin flecks from a wish-dragon, you've probably just seen Ronley Teper play live.



Photo: Ali Eisner

"A PERFECT MONSTROSITY!"

Visit Ronley's website at:
www.ronleyteper.com

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