



Photo courtesy of www.ofmontreal.net

The band of Montreal performed live at The Blue Note in Columbia.

The Blue Note hosts of Montreal

BY KELSEY LANDHUIS
Reviewer

"It's a freakin' dinosaur!" the guy standing behind me shouted to his friend in excitement as of Montreal took the stage Friday night at The Blue Note in Columbia.

Unfortunately, he was mistaken. The figure that appeared on stage was not, in fact, a freakin' dinosaur, but rather a suit-clad businessman with the head of a tiger. Several comrades wearing jumpsuits and gas masks soon joined him in a bizarre dance scene that I could barely see from where I was standing, but it made the crowd go wild.

The band members came on stage a few minutes later wearing costumes that were no less unique. They included a cave-man bass player, a beret-wearing French drummer, a medieval lady keyboardist and lead singer Kevin Barnes, a character in himself, wearing a bright purple puffy-sleeved jacket and large circles of silver glitter around his eyes.

Without even greeting the audience, of Montreal launched into the first track from their latest album, "Skeletal Lamping," a jaunty little ditty called "Nonpareil of Favor."

"My lover / I've been donating time to review / All the misinterpretations that define / Me and you," Barnes sang as videos and illustrations flashed on three large screens above the band, colored lights pulsed on the panels below and a unique cast of characters — including tiger-man, a giant flesh-colored blob, what seemed like dozens of dancers with black leotards and sparkling silver, gold and red masks and yes, eventually a brontosaurus (dressed up as Superman, no less) — acted out an undecipherable, surreal drama on the stage.

The show was a constant barrage of sounds and images, driving every other thought from my head except for the desire — make that the overpowering need — to dance. Songs that were merely pleasant in their recorded versions generated a raw power when they were performed live, and the energy of a crowd that was totally into it added to the frenzied atmosphere that demonstrated the truth of the lyrics to "The Party's Crashing Us" — "I only feel alive when the view is flashing / And bombs going off in my head."

I feverishly sang along to songs I can never remember the titles of but whose lyrics have been embedded in my subconscious ever since I started listening to of Montreal at the insistence of my much cooler and more music-savvy brother. Highlights of the show included the incredible "Bunny Ain't No Kind of Rider" and the last song before the encore, a dark tale of self-discovery called "A Sentence of Sorts in Kongsvinger."

which Barnes introduced by declaring, "This is the best song ever!" as a cloud of pink feathers shot out into the crowd.

After a brief, strange performance by a mock band featuring tiger-man on lead vocals, Super-dinosaur on drums, a guitar-playing pig and several other characters, the band returned for a three-song encore. By the time they got to the closer, "Heimdalsgate Like a Promethean Curse," there was barely a person on the floor who wasn't dancing, jumping or singing along to the chorus. "Come on, chemicals!" the audience pleaded, although the sensual overload of the show and the frenzied dancing that accompanied it created a completely unique, natural high — no chemicals needed.

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"Sit Down, Shut Up" doomed for failure



Photos courtesy of www.sitdownshutup.fox.com

The new show "Sit Down, Shut Up" is created from the man who made "Arrested Development." However, the show has received poor reviews and lacks the humor of "Arrested Development."

BY HARRY BURSON
Reviewer

Any new TV show should be allowed a grace period to find its footing.

If you've ever gone back and watched some of the early episodes of your favorite shows, you probably were struck by how weird they seemed — bad gags, strange pacing, different characters. Remember early "Saved by the Bell" or the first season of "The Simpsons"? Both of those shows went on to find their voices (especially "Saved by the Bell") despite their rocky start.

But some shows are different. They start off slow but show no signs

of promise. Jokes fall flat, characters and stories are unbelievable, or worse, boring. It's not awkward, just bad. Every year networks go through numerous shows that demonstrate these characteristics. The doomed show will struggle for a few weeks before being cancelled. Not a big deal — who cares?

After watching the first two episodes, I am confident in saying "Sit Down, Shut Up" is a terrible show. Normally, I wouldn't care about another misguided cartoon. But considering the show's pedigree, the pain of watching is particularly intense.

"Sit Down, Shut Up" is an adaptation of an Australian television show that ran way back in 2000. Mitchell Hurwitz,

the man behind the wildly funny and creative cult show "Arrested Development," is responsible for bringing the show to the states. He also is the reason for the incredible cast, which features "Arrested Development" alumni Will Arnett and Jason Bateman, along with the reliably funny Will Forte, Kenan Thompson, Cheri Oteri, Tom Kenny and Henry Winkler.

"Arrested Development" had a small but rabid fan base that seems to have only grown since the show ended in 2006. Accordingly, expectations for "Sit Down, Shut Up" were high, but that has little to do with the disappointment of longtime Hurwitz fans with the show. The show

bombs even if you're expecting absolutely nothing.

"Sit Down, Shut Up" airs as part of Fox's successful "Animation Domination" Sunday night programming along with "The Simpsons," "Family Guy" and "American Dad!" so it virtually is guaranteed good ratings. Unfortunately, rather

than aping the clever writing of "The Simpsons" or even the ADD gags of "Family Guy," the show is most similar to the dismal "American Dad!" in its use of obvious punch lines and easy stereotypes.

Like in "Arrested Development," Jason Bateman's character is a levelheaded everyman (in this case a gym coach) surrounded by obnoxious characters. Will Arnett again plays a self-obsessed idiot, but

instead of being a magician, he's an English teacher.

There is also an effeminate male drama teacher, a foreign janitor, an uncaring administrator and a clueless assistant principal. Let no cliché be unused!

The students are notably absent as the plot lines revolve around the vulgar, inept teachers. As with "Arrested Development," the plots are mostly irrelevant, serving only as a loose structure to cram in as many jokes as possible.

And the jokes come. They are rapid-fire but too crass and without the human touch (i.e. actors on camera) that gave "Arrested Development" its heart. Characters constantly break the fourth wall with annoyingly repetitive self-aware catch phrases and references to their screen time.

Some of this wackiness might work in a live-action comedy (apparently what Hurwitz originally intended) but falls flat in the already absurd world of cartoons.

I cannot imagine this show getting better. I also can't imagine it lasting beyond its first season (if that). Then again, "American Dad!" has soldiered on for four seasons now, so one should never underestimate the tenacity of terrible television.

"Sit Down, Shut Up" airs Sundays on Fox at 7:30 p.m. That means it's right between "The Simpsons" and "Family Guy." If you are planning on watching both of those shows anyway, I would recommend turning off Fox between 7:30 and 8 and putting in an "Arrested Development" DVD instead. Or read a blog. It's up to you.

"I would recommend turning off Fox between 7:30 and 8 and putting in an 'Arrested Development' DVD instead."

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