

# BIRTHMARKS

Born Ruffians' return to form **BY ALEX J MACPHERSON**

**B**irthmarks is the cleanest and clearest record Born Ruffians have ever made. Without sacrificing the schizophrenic energy that shaped its predecessors, *Birthmarks* has pushed the Toronto band into new musical territory — the land of glassy guitars, pristine soundscapes, and quality production. But don't think for a second Born Ruffians have abandoned their manic lo-fi roots. By making *Birthmarks* sound better than its predecessors, Luke Lalonde and his bandmates created more space for it to sound worse.

The critical moment comes at the end of "Rage Flows." As the song reaches its frenzied apex, the dangerously catchy dance riff devolves into a cacophony of overdriven valves and torn speaker cones. This fuzzed-out breakdown is the heart of the record, and it shows that Born Ruffians are pushing the boundaries of independent rock music. It is not surprising, then, that Lalonde thinks of it as a new beginning.

"The track list, I think, is structured around that point, of your speakers blowing up," he says, referring to the album's knife-edged contours. "I feel like the last two records were, like, a certain type of aesthetic. And this one is different. The title is definitely a reflection of how we feel about the record and the music."

Born Ruffians emerged nearly a decade ago. After releasing *The Makeshift Metric Catastrophe* as Mornington Drive, the group changed their name and cut a pair of blistering rock records. Their debut EP and *Red, Yellow & Blue* are exuberant celebrations of minimalist guitar rock — cagey songs paired with clever arrangements. *Birthmarks* feels like a return to form after *Say It*, which was released in 2010, proved disappointingly conservative.

"I always feel like we're kind of striving to grow all the time," Lalonde muses, struggling to balance the impulse to expand against the expectations of his many fans. "We're happy



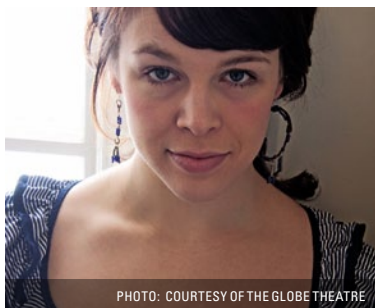
with what we've done, but I think the aim is always to reach a new audience and a bigger audience — not necessarily just to write for the people that you already have. But the fans you have are a special thing."

Lalonde likens rock bands to friends. Just as someone can only make room for so many friends, he can only make room in his life for so many bands. But *Birthmarks* is perhaps the best kind of greeting imaginable: cheerful, challenging, and redolent of possibility. **V**

*Born Ruffians*  
March 26 @ The Exchange  
\$13 @ Ticketedge

# THE FUSION PROJECT

A small group of young actors creates something astonishing **BY ALEX J MACPHERSON**



**M**ost plays can take months or even years to develop. From first draft to final performance, even the most straightforward productions consume a staggering number of hours. Most of the time.

*The Fusion Project* dispenses with the usual timeline, proving instead that a group of young artists can create a new theatrical work in just

two months. "It's really unique to the Globe, and it's part of a really big vision the theatre has in terms of training young artists," says director Judy Wensel, who has experienced *The Fusion Project* from both sides of the curtain, and understands just how difficult — and rewarding — it can be. "I think what makes it so special is that there's this sense of ownership on behalf of the ensemble. They've been there from the very seeds of the creation of the piece."

*The Fusion Project* is at its most basic a loose framework on which the cast, made up of actors between the ages of 16 and 19, can hang their ideas and ambitions. Because the ensemble changes each year, the results can vary dramatically. Sometimes the production employs a linear narrative; in other years, it emerges as a

series of vignettes, linked by a broad theme or idea.

"It's always like you're on the precipice of trying to find a coherent narrative," Wensel laughs. "Sometimes, directors have a really, really specific aesthetic or tone or story in mind that they'd like to tell. This year, I came in with a pretty clear idea of the world of the show."

With final rehearsals still underway that world is still developing, but Wensel can say that the play is set in an unnamed coastal town and heavily influenced by The Handsome Family, a Chicago alt-country duo known for sparsely poetic lyrics and eerie musical backdrops.

Ultimately, *The Fusion Project* offers a group of talented young actors the opportunity to do something extraordinary, to perform a play of their own

**\$25 ACTIVATION CREDIT\***  
when you bring in this coupon

\*New activations only, some conditions apply. Offer expires March 31, 2013.

**moga** mobile  
Cornwall Centre Soundland Mall 306.546.0511 306.564.0511

Exclusive Dealer **fido**

## Carmela Laganse: Spread

Curated by Wendy Peart  
Organized by the Dunlop Art Gallery

**MARCH 23 TO MAY 23, 2013**  
Regina Public Library Sherwood Village Gallery  
6121 Rochdale Boulevard



Carmela Laganse *Scrag End* 2010. Ceramic, textile, wood

OPENING RECEPTION AND ARTIST TALK:

**Saturday, March 23 at 1:00 pm**



Canada Council for the Arts  
Conseil des Arts du Canada



REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY, 2311 12TH AVENUE  
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4P 3Z5 TEL 306 1 777 6040  
FAX 306 1 949 7260 WWW.DUNLOPARTGALLERY.ORG



devising on a professional stage. "At the end of it," Wensel says, "you look back and think about how far you've come. You're showing this totally new thing that didn't exist two months ago and does now." It is, by any measure, a remarkable achievement — and given the average age of the actors, a promise of much more to come. **V**

*The Fusion Project*  
March 20 -23 @ Globe Theatre  
\$20+ @ Globe Theatre Box Office

**Feedback? Text it! (306) 881 8372**

**@MacPhersonA**  
**amacpherson@verbnews.com**

## NEXT WEEK IN ARTS SAID THE WHALE