

THE KERPLUNKS

BY DAVID MORRISON

Concerning popular entertainment awards ceremonies, there's rarely any pleasing me. Be it the Grammys, Oscars or whatever, I'll find something to whinge about. It could be a shameful omission from the nominees, or the triumph of one over another far more deserving. It's all a matter of taste, of course, but then occasionally there are inexplicable decisions that by rights should bewilder most observers.

Take this year's Junos for example. Despite the fact the band's internationally distributed debut album was released six years back and two more have dropped since, Montreal's *The Stills* was named New Group of the Year. What? Frankly, this is preposterous and bizarre, let alone a slap in the face for all emerging homegrown talent striving for mainstream recognition.

Of greater controversy in the eyes of many, however, was the presentation of *Best Children's Album* to *Barenaked Ladies* – whose singer's bust for cocaine possession made global headlines just a few months prior. While I'm certainly no prudish moral crusader, this just does not sit easy with me. Regardless of whether the prize is judged purely on music, I still feel it was an ill-advised choice.

Up for the same award was the self-released, eponymous debut album from Vancouver Island favourites, *The Kerplunks*. When I grilled local *Kerplunk*, Aaron Cadwaladr, and his Gabriola Island-based bandmate, Dinah D, about missing out to this contentious decision, they brought philosophical and pragmatic.

"Just to be nominated for a Juno Award is a great honour," says Aaron. "It would have been quite an upset for the debut album of an independent group from Gabriola Island to beat out one of Canada's major label mega-bands for the Juno!"

Dinah concurs, yet also says: "We have been approached by countless people who are outraged by the Juno committee's decision to honour the *Barenaked Ladies*, especially after their somewhat tarnished recent past. We are good role models, and that's all we can be. We enjoy playing music professionally and want to tell the next generation how excellent music can be."

Hoo-ha aside, Aaron (guitar/vocals), Dinah (upright bass/banjo/kazoo/vocals) and fellow *Kerplunks* Tina Jones (vocals/trumpet/



L-R: Phil Wipper, Dinah D,
Tina Jones and Aaron Cadwaladr

Kerplunks photo courtesy Lance Sullivan of Concept Photography: www.conceptphoto.ca

trombone/clarinet/ad infinitum) and Phil Wipper (drums) were understandably bowled over when the news came in that they'd be attending the Junos.

"I was in the studio in Vancouver working on my own album when I heard the exciting news from Tina and Dinah that we were going to the Junos," Aaron recalls. "I immediately sent an email out to my friends and family to let them know the news! We knew we had a good chance at being nominated with our earlier wins for the album at the *Western Canadian Music Awards* and *Canadian Folk Music Awards*, so when we found out for sure that we were nominated it was very exciting for us!"

"Our Juno, *Best Children's Album*, was presented during a dinner gala the evening before the televised Junos," continues Dinah in recollection of the big night. "We really weren't nervous at all for the red carpet, the media interviews, or the big televised show itself. But excited, yes! We had tons of cameras and flash bulbs going off in our faces, with interviews everywhere and people wanting to know 'who we were wearing.' We told an interviewer that we were wearing 'Zellers: \$29.99.' It was pretty fun!"

A natural consequence of the band's Juno nomination has been increased national exposure and, as Dinah explains, a surge of attendant interest in their music from various quarters.

"The Kerplunks have definitely been enjoying some credibility in the children's entertainment industry since our nomination for the Juno," she says. "We're seeing more shows coming our way, much more fan mail via our website, and our album sales have gone up slightly. We have interest in management, bookings, publicity and distribution, and we're navigating this change of pace quite well."

So, The Kerplunks' calendar is looking increasingly full for the foreseeable future, with much to look forward to over the next twelve months. The next major event for the band is the release this month of their sophomore album, *Walk On*, but plans are already afoot to record the third.

Could it be that *Walk On* or its follow-up will take the irrepressible Dinah, Tina, Aaron and Phil to even greater heights, to the Best Children's Album Juno so many feel should have been theirs this year? I for one certainly hope so, but if it does happen you will not hear a word of complaint from me! ~

For much more information on *The Kerplunks*, their music and shows schedule, please visit their websites at:

www.thekerplunks.com

www.myspace.com/thekerplunks