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Canadian musicians Jesse F. Keeler (bass) and Drummer Sebastian Grainger (drums) combine their dark forces as Death From Above 1979.

IMF follows Death From Above 1979 to Canada

by Jack McManus '13

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

For most students (including myself), typical Monday nights at Hamilton involve homework, club meetings, maybe some football and relaxing weekend recovery. This past Monday evening had something else in store for five students: sophomore Brendon Kaufman and seniors Lucas Kang, Brendan Doherty, Pete Adelfio and myself. Replacing the books in our backpacks with warm coats and passports, the five of us travelled up to Kingston, Ontario to see the dance punk duo Death From Above 1979 on a trip sponsored by Hamilton's Independent Music Fund.

Squeezing into every available seat in my Honda, we rolled off campus at 4:30, pointing ourselves towards I-81 north. After a Nice N' Easy stop and accidentally rolling straight through a tollbooth that apparently didn't accept EZ Pass, we merged onto the direct

route to Canada just after twilight (which came a disorienting hour early thanks to Daylight Savings). A few hours and indie rock albums later we reached the border, crossing the border in darkness and passing into the mysterious land of kilometers and road signs en Francais.

Arriving in the lakeside city of Kingston, at 8 p.m. we found our first destination: Smoke's Poutinerie. We spent a solid chunk of the drive discussing Poutine, a local dish that sounded unbelievable to most of us (using every definition of the word). Described accurately by Lucas as a massive pile of gravy-drenched French Fries and cheese chunks, it was obviously the only thing we were going to eat for dinner that night. Although it initially seemed abandoned, Smoke's was a paradise of junk food buckets, offering Poutine boxes topped with everything from salsa and roasted peppers to homemade chili and chipotle pulled pork. A *Toronto Star* article on the wall explained the food's particu-

lar appeal to "drunkards," which we immediately understood when ours arrived from the kitchen. We all immediately regretted ordering large portions, one of which easily could have fed my whole family, but our cardboard troughs of Smoke's plain, pulled pork, bacon cheeseburger and triple pork (which included bacon, sausage and pulled pork) varieties were all insanely delicious. Doherty came the closest, but none of us were ultimately capable of filling ourselves with that much food in one sitting.

Heading around the corner to the venue, we found a sizable line forming down Princess Street. After waiting in the cold Canadian night for almost an hour we finally reached the door of The Alehouse, a 900 person capacity venue decorated with airplanes and pictures of athletes from the nearby Queen's University. Rush's "Tom Sawyer" played from the house system as we received our wristbands, giving the whole scene an overwhelming, almost laughably over-the-top Canadianness. Exploring the venue, it didn't take long to realize we were probably the only Americans who had made the trip up for the week-night show. As both Canadians and indie scenesters, most of the crowd unsurprisingly sported thick beards, moustaches, flannel shirts and the occasional knit beanie. Of all of us, Brendan Doherty was the closest to being mistaken for a Canadian, if not for the fact that he wore an American flag bandanna tied around his head all night.

Kingston locals P.S. I Love You opened the show, winning over the hometown crowd with their hazy, melodic guitar lines and grunge drums. Lead singer and guitarist Paul Saulnier's reserved clumsiness gave the band a relatable stage presence, showing the crowd his humble, unpretentious personality while dealing out impressive guitar licks by the dozen. Also, while he may have seemed like an average guy, he looked to weigh as much as four of them. I guess that's what happens in a country known for Poutine.

The opening set ended around 10:45 p.m. and the excitement for

DFA1979 starting to boil over the sides of its pot. We passed the time talking to Mike, a politics major at Queen's and the guy standing next to us. Discovering our American-ness, Mike was immediately interested in discussing the next day's presidential election. Interested in the outcome but seemingly unfamiliar with the candidates' positions, Mike expressed legitimate disbelief that anyone, especially a presidential candidate, could oppose pro-choice legislation. Our conversation ended at 11:02 when DFA took the stage, although Mike and I would meet several more times in the mosh pit.

Assuming their respective positions behind the drums and next to a massive bass amplifier, Sebastian Grainger and Jesse F. Keeler whipped the crowd into a frenzy with their first notes. A churning, flailing, collision-happy mosh pit formed in the center section of the dance floor, with parts on either sides divided off by arbitrary lines of security guards who refused to let any more people into the tumultuous mob. Only Lucas found himself in the center pit at this point, as the rest of us watched him enjoy the obviously more fun section. Eventually, using different forms of manipulation, trickery and deception, we all eventually made our way into the terrifying ocean of elbows, ready to rage like Canadians. Keeler (who Hamilton students may know better as JFK, having made a DJ appearance at WHCL's late night last year) drove the heavy, aggressive grooves with his effected bass lines while Grainger took lead vocal duties and build a steady, danceable foundation with his combination of electronic and acoustic percussion. Halfway through a tour across Canada, the Toronto natives spent the breaks between songs dis-

cussing the Canadian music scene and telling stories about their own experiences in Kingston, where Grainger apparently lost his virginity and first tried drugs. More classic Canadian moments came during these breaks, as between each song the moshers stopped thrashing to make sure everyone around them was okay and having a good time, baffling us with their courtesy every time.



PHOTO BY JACK MCMANUS '13

Brendon Kaufman '15 digs into a massive serving of Poutine.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCAS KANG '13

Crowds lined the block outside The Alehouse in Kingston, ON.

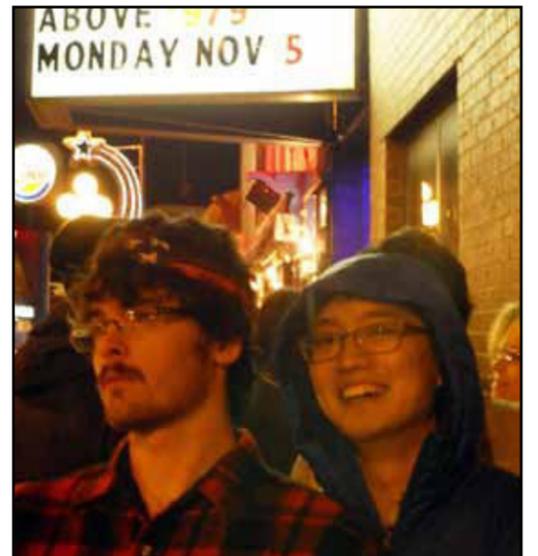


PHOTO BY JACK MCMANUS '13

Doherty '13 and Kang '13 ready for DFA.

Breathless, sweat-drenched and nursing minor injuries, the five of us spilled out into the icy Canadian outdoors at 12:30 A.M., desperate for sleep and ice water. Eventually dragging our exhausted, poutine-stuffed bodies to the closest Econolodge, we recounted the night's events over vintage Canadian game shows. Taking full advantage of the hotel room, Lucas took a twenty minute bath while the rest of us calmed down from the show. After that we all fell very much asleep. We awoke before nine, hitting the road as soon as possible to make our Tuesday afternoon classes. Soon we were back, landing on campus at noon—less than twenty hours after the adventure started. Desperately needing showers and new clothes, the group shared feelings of exhaustion, awe, and hearing loss as we limped back to our suites and rooms, grateful to IMF for the most ridiculous Monday night of our Hamilton careers.