

## Acadian night live at The Mack

*Vishtèn wows audience with an energetic CD recording concert that captures all the energy this talented group has to offer*

BY Todd MacLean, Out and About, The GUARDIAN

For a band that has just returned from a six-week tour of France, Belgium and Holland and has had a whopping 25 European tours, along with over 15 U.S. tours throughout its seven-year existence, it seems there could be no more proper way to record an album than in front of a live audience.

And last weekend, Vishtèn, our Acadian music dream team of P.E.I. and Îles de la Madeleine, did just this.

Over the course of last Friday and Saturday nights, Vishtèn heated up the stage at The Mack before wildly enthusiastic crowds both nights, cutting the tracks as they fiercely cut into the jigs and reels, sang their hearts out and played up a storm for all who had the pleasure of taking it in.

And I was one of those lucky ones at hand last Friday as I walked in and grabbed a seat at the bar just before things got underway after 8 p.m.

« This is really the culmination of seven years touring experience for Vishtèn, » Music P.E.I. director Rob Oakie said in his introduction for the band.

« Their second album just received the ECMA for francophone recording of the year, and now this recording from tonight's performance will be released in the fall of this year. So, let's please welcome, Vishtèn! »

To a flurry of applause and whoops, the four-member ensemble walked out on stage, picked up their instruments and promptly eased into the first traditional set of the night.

Starting with a reel with a cheerful kick, Elmer Deagle began earnestly strumming his acoustic, as Pascal Miousse vibrantly picked out the tune on the mandolin, while Pastelle LeBlanc joined the melody in flawless unison on the accordion, soon followed by her twin, Emmanuelle LeBlanc, on the tin whistle, as she foot-tapped a driving Acadian beat while seated on her chair.

Et voilà : C'est Vishtèn.

Right off the bat, it was a fine example of the ingredients that have made this group of extremely talented musicians the powerful Acadian punch that they are together.

And for the rest of the night, as they paraded from one perfected tune to the next, changed instruments more times than Mariah Cary changes outfits and enchanted and propelled our hearts with every twist and turn, we felt the force of this punch in every beat.

« Ah, merci, » Emmanuelle sighed as she caught her breath at the conclusion of one of their first sets of tunes.

« My heart is beating so fast – we are all so nervous! » she laughed. « If we really screw up a song, we're going to stop and start it over again for the recording. »

LeBlanc then introduced a bonus member to the ensemble for the night, who was picking up a bass guitar behind her as she spoke. « Please welcome Rémi Arsenault to the stage! »

With his aid, the sound was rounded out to an even greater degree in the song that followed, and throughout the evening, as his whopping bass lines and tasteful acoustic guitar work added an extra marvellous spice to the ingredients.

All in all, some of the main highlights throughout the two-and-a-half-hour-long performance were : 1)A Song Without Words, written and performed by Deagle on acoustic, with Emmanuelle on wooden whistle; 2)the last set of reels before intermission which really got the fire burning; 3)The Hybrid Theaory set in the second half, which then almost burned down The Mack in its heat as the party got so pumping that I felt as though I had been instantly teleported to an Acadian house bash;and 4)guest appearances by Phillipe LeBlanc on flute (father of the LeBlanc twins) and the father of Pascal Miousse, who accompanied his son on one of his many spectacular fiddle performances throughout the evening.

The entertainment reached a climax as they pulled out all the stops in the finale – a minor reel, cut out by Miousse’s fiddle, with Deagle driving it on the mandolin, Pastelle filling it out with the accordion, Arsenault accompanying on acoustic and Emmanuelle punding out a bodhran beat. After an interlude of angelic singing by Pastelle and Emmanuelle and then a breakdown to just the single drum on its own, they exploded into a fury of zipping reel lines to the end.

Indeed, the night was well worth the standing ovation and the encore they received.

If the members of Vishtèn were nervous on this night, it’s hard to imagine how they sounded the following night, a little more relaxed, knowing that they’d already nailed it all on their first try.

And if you’d like to now hear this for yourself, you’re in luck this time. Just find yourself a copy of the CD when it’s released this fall.

Or, catch them live, playing June 21 in the Francopholies de Charlottetown.