

# Have a little Faith

By MIKE ROSS  
Sun Entertainment

You may notice a few strange things about Big Faith, the band playing at Ike & Iggy's this weekend.

Take the bass player, for instance — there isn't one.

Playing a richly-toned 10-stringed instrument called a Chapman stick, Fergus Marsh hammers down the bottom end, making the groove with drummer Mike Sloski.

There isn't really a guitarist, either. Ken Greer mostly plays a steel guitar — and in such a unique way that you probably wouldn't even think of Nashville.

And on David Bowie-ish lead vocals, there's Chris Tait.

Do these names ring bells? They should — that's the other strange thing about Big Faith. All the players are Canadian heavyweights: Marsh and Sloski used to be Bruce Cockburn's rhythm section, Tait was the lead singer of Chalk Circle, and you may remember Greer when he was here with Lawrence "Call Me Larry" Gowan, and also as a co-founding member of Red Rider (before Tom Cochrane's ballooning ego eclipsed everything).

So why are such top-flight musicians playing in such a small nightclub?

"This is our first step outside the parameters of southern Ontario," explains Greer. "The band's independent and it's taken a little while for us to establish enough contacts. We don't even have a manager. We're running the ship ourselves until somebody steps up to the batter's box and says, 'let me hit the home run for you.'"

Mixing baseball and seafaring metaphors aside, Greer says Big Faith is the first project he's been in since Red Rider where he doesn't feel like a sideman.

"All the other things I've done, I was a hired



Big Faith is in the city to play at Ike and Iggy's this weekend.

gun. This is a band. We're all pretty well starving together. That's the best criteria for a band: Are you prepared to starve? Bring it out and stick together whether you're actually going anywhere for a while. Because it takes a long time."

A strong start is the hot-off-the-presses CD *Undertow* (not to be confused with Tool's latest), a project all the band members had a hand in writing.

"Everybody comes up with something to add," says Greer.

"It's certainly not an equally-shared writing process, but it tends to work better that way. Having a whole band writing together is a mess. We've managed to collaborate without stepping on each other's toes too much."

Greer doesn't seem to miss being in a big-time recording act. It would probably cramp his style at this point; the thing he says he really likes about being an independent act is the freedom.

"One of my favorite reasons for being in the band is that I get to do exactly what I want. And I think that's everybody else's reason, too. It's total freedom and we're all smart enough to know what that should be.

"We're not a gimmicky band. If

our music doesn't sell, it's either that it's not getting heard or it's simply not going to sell.

"But that's the beauty of being an independent band. If we can get our music heard and it sells a small amount, what would be a dismal failure with a major label would be an incredible success independently. It's an interesting route to go and I think a lot of people are getting hip to it.

"It hasn't been easy," Greer pauses. "But then, we expected that."

Big Faith plays through Saturday.

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