

Gloom descends on Habs, Mason fans

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Visitors to this city might well be asking why all the long faces this weekend. Well, allow me to explain:

Those citizens not livid over the negative review of Jackie Mason's shtick at Place des Arts printed Wednesday in this newspaper, are still in mourning after the Habs simply gave a game away - it was in the bloody bag - to Carolina Thursday night at the Molson Centre. And judging from all the phone calls and mail and mall banter, there are, astonishingly, almost as many people in the first camp as in the second.

Now, more wizened visitors to this city are probably uttering: Perspective, people. It's only a comedy show. It's only a hockey game.

Well, yes and no. You see, it's also a religious thing. There are those who hold the Habs and even Mason as sacred institutions, even though devotees might not actually subscribe to the same religions as the aforementioned. But anyone who messes with either will face the music.

Frankly, I am far more rankled about the Habs blowing it than Mason getting ripped by a reviewer who is entitled to her opinion. Fact is, the ageless Mason will probably return to glory real soon. But will the Habs?

Once again, the team, after being shut out of the playoffs for an eternity (OK, four years), has toyed with our hearts. They've allowed us to indulge in the ultimate fantasy, that they might be on the brink of bringing another Stanley Cup banner to hang from the Molson Centre ceiling.

And now reality has set in. And grownups who should know better than to live vicariously through the exploits of a hockey team are in a monster funk. Yes, we're bummed out.

It's a little silly. No, it's a lot silly. As no less an oracle than Red Fisher pointed out, the team has come farther than anyone had anticipated - so take solace. And as sage buddy Pauly Shabazz advised, take a chill-pill - there is so much more to get worked up about.

Like escalator rage? Evidently.

Befuddled visitors, allow me to elaborate once again. Thursday's column about escalator etiquette in this city triggered the sort of groundswell one expects when writing about ... mmm ... the woes of the Habs.

Darryl Levine has launched a petition to implement a policy that would compel stationary folks on métro escalators here to stay to the right so that those in a hurry can pass on the left. Sounds innocuous enough, right?

Well, an agitated correspondent, Tony, partly attributed his bolting from the city to the bush to the "lard-asses" who refused to let him pass on the escalator. "I've been on escalators in subways in many European cities and a couple of others in North America. Montreal is the only city that seems to exhibit this crass behaviour," he noted in an E-missive.

However, Tony, as did Nancy Gionet, acknowledged that a simple "excuse me" can occasionally work wonders.

Michael Elliott, on the other hand, fears that escalator rage is symptomatic of something far worse in society: "The problem is that we are so focused on rushing, efficiency and productivity that we can't even

enjoy the electronic free ride that is an escalator. The popular belief among the suits and cell phones downtown is that if you are not in a rush, you must not be busy, and therefore you are a lazy loser. Well, I'm sorry, that's something I would expect to hear in Toronto but, unfortunately, it has crept down stream to Montreal." Ouch!

But perhaps Mike McLean best sums up the situation. Like other issues on the hotplate here - the colour of margarine, right turns on reds, sausage carts on the street - escalator chaos is just another Quebec quirk. "Maurice Duplessis must be gazing lovingly down upon us and thinking all is well in the Kingdom," McLean mused. "This might be a dysfunctional backwater, but it's home. What are ya gonna do?"

Welcome to our world.

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And welcome back to our world, alumni of Rosemount High School. They're coming from as far as Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland to participate in 50th-anniversary celebrations for the school next Saturday night in the building's two gyms.

And, co-organizer Tom Powell says, many of the 2,000 expected to attend are coming back to solve a decades-old conundrum: just how did some mischievous students ever manage to move the teacher's car from the parking lot to the fenced-in football field - with only a small entrance gate?

Powell estimates that the majority of alumni now reside out of town, and one of the largest contingents coming is from Calgary. In fact, former students had been holding more class reunions in Calgary than here. So it goes.

But Rosemount High teachers in attendance can breathe a sigh of relief. "Few celebrants will be in a position to be picking up cars and moving them around next week," he said. "We'd take our backs out - we'll be whooping it up, but we're not that crazy."

- Tickets for the 50th-anniversary bash at Rosemount High School, May 18 at 7 p.m., cost \$50. Call (514) 376-1320 or visit the Web site: www.rosemounthighschool.com.

homestead.com.

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