

# Dr. Heckle and Mr. Jive

DON'T BLAME ROOTS MUSICIAN ERIC LAROCQUE IF HE OFFENDS YOU. WHEN HIS POPULAR LOUNGE-SINGING ALTER EGO RICKY DIAMONDS TAKES OVER, IT'S GONNA GET CRASS.

BY MATT COTÉ



**In a dimly lit bar** in Golden, British Columbia, a mix of delusional self-importance and desperation shapes the frenetic movements of the night's first performer: Ricky Diamonds. A slick-haired and moustachioed lounge singer exiled from Las Vegas, Diamonds runs through the crowd in a purple suede blazer and ascot, tearing through exaggerated karaoke versions of Neil Diamond's "Forever in Blue Jeans" and Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams." He mixes with patrons, wrapping his arm uncomfortably around them while stuffing his pockets with coffee creamers from their tables.

"You suck!" yells a lumberjack from the back row. "Thank you!" Diamonds exuberantly yells back with a wink and pistol fingers, barely missing a beat. His singing pushes well past his

natural register, and he luxuriates in every note with gratuitous legato. His oversexed dancing, that of a C-grade Elvis impersonator, only serves to make his performance more dank. Rednecks hate him; hipsters love him; and owning that strange space is turning Diamonds into an ironic darling of the East Kootenay music scene. Before COVID-19, he was emceeing festival stages and opening for some of the biggest bands travelling through the region — while also filling bars from Revelstoke to Vancouver.

His shirt is off and his greased hair dangles like a stray dog's wet mane, and numerous tattoos hint at a different past. There's one on a forearm for the *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album by the Byrds and Gram Parsons. Others on his hands signify an affinity for clawhammer banjo. Miles from the

wholesomeness of roots music now, Diamonds makes cringey off-colour jokes between songs and lambastes the venue at every opportunity. "What the fuck is this?" he asks over the mic when his martini is delivered too dry.

The absolute personification of musical failure, he still manages to express the bloated assertion that he's "better than this place" at every opportunity, simultaneously punctuating the show with tragicomic sadness. "Who spent last night crying? I know Ricky did!" he announces, before diving into a vocal-chord-exploding rendition of "Crying" by Roy Orbison. "He's a real asshole," says Brenna Donaldson, Whitetooth Brewing Co.'s tasting-room manager, "but he brings the crowds, so what can you do?"