

# Live

**Joe Cocker**  
Logan Campbell Centre,  
May 29.

Frankly we didn't really want to go. Cocker's last concert here - in '82 - had been a pretty lacklustre affair: his voice only just coping and the band too stodgy for the (then) new *Sheffield Steel* songs. But what a transformation! Joe's team delivered one of the most satisfying sets this reviewer's ears, hands or feet have pounded to for a very long time. So what's changed?

Firstly there was a rejuvenated band, particularly with new rhythm duo, which gave such a lift to every number. The drummer was powerful and driving without getting heavy-handed. The bassist, rather than simply nail things down, added a complexity and excitement that was exhilarating. His lines refreshed even the oldest songs (and the solo in 'Hitchcock Railroad' could well be the finest display of 'finger-popping' I'll ever see).

Then there were the arrangements: so rich, subtle, expansive and so very supportive. Add these to the excellent choice of songs and Cocker's gravelly vocals had a superb setting. But don't underestimate Joe's own contribution. To him for example, must be ascribed the responsibility for the show's pacing. And it takes a brave soul to choose three out of four consecutive songs as ballads mid-set, especially given the vociferous 'Play some rawkenroll!' element in the audience. Yet he triumphed. The 'Inner City Blues' tribute to Marvin Gaye was particularly beautiful.

But - 'Little Help...' aside - Cocker wasn't punishing his voice the way he has on past tours. Their was almost a sense of control about his singing, in keeping with the trimmer hair,

physique and less manic gesturing. Cocker's been at this game for fifteen years now and has an extensive repertoire: fine new songs, a wealth of cover versions and an armful of his own classics. With band and back-up singers in such form, whatever the selection he'd made would have been a delight. (Even the vapid 'You Are So Beautiful' sounded good.) Over the past years there have been as many ways to describe Joe Cocker in concert as he has done tours. This one was simply magnificent. Peter Thomson

**Verlaines, Able Tasmans**  
Windsor, May 19.

Given even the diverse nature of the crowd that had crammed in to hear the Verlaines, it was inevitable that a large percentage would find the Able Tasmans appealing. Swirling, soulful keyboards, fast dance songs, wholly appropriate covers of 'I'm A Man' and 'Peter Gunn Theme' - even a rendition of the theme from *Closeup*. Real neat fun. But there's another side developing to this three-piece. Graham Humphries sings some strange, dark little songs with more than a hint of the Magazine in them. It will be interesting to see when/whether the Able Tasmans reach the limits of the drums bass organ format but thus far they've managed to move on without losing their sense of fun. If they can keep that up, well

This was the third time I'd seen the current Verlaines lineup and each occasion has been better than the last. Twixt the opening chord and the final encore they created a feeling that welled and surged. A lot of people danced, some stood or sat and watched, a few left. Not much space for socialising in this music.

On conventional critical grounds the Verlaines might be marked down for not putting an effort into presentation - on the contrary, as someone said, the Verlaines are a band who try very hard. When they play well, they're pushing it. When it doesn't come off their

approach can manifest itself as awkwardness or mere earnestness but them's the breaks.

And another thing - Death and the Maiden doesn't particularly stand out in the set. 'Joed Out', 'Doomsday', 'Pyromaniac' and a number of others produced at least as much of a charge. The Verlaines do work very much within a sound but it's more to do with continuity than repetition.

An emotional cacophony - the Verlaines really are quite an extreme band. Russell Brown

**Empire Queen's Birthday Party**  
Verlaines, the Rip, Love in a Gas Oven, Pink Plastic Gods  
Empire, June 4.

This afternoon session marked the third and last Empire party. In August proprietors John and Maureen Simpson vacate the pub, which over the past three years has been the only hotel in the city to consistently offer alternative entertainment.

It was a nice touch, then, that the Verlaines, a band who two and a half years ago were playing to little more than ashtrays, closed the day in front of a full house.

The band has clearly taken on a classical bent, meaning the climactic raunch of, say, 'You Say You' has been sacrificed for the more symphonic order of 'Burlisque'.

Somebody described it as boring. But if fellow Dunedinites the Idles are the country's fastest rising band (as suggested on *RWPiccies*) then I think the Verlaines must have already found their way to the top and are currently proceeding to shit all over the Idles and their ilk.

People are beginning to realise the Rip shouldn't share a bill with the Verlaines but for once Alastair Galbraith and his cohorts transcended their flattering influences. They managed to inject some sweat and inspiration into their closing instrumental 'Blackout' and bassist Robbie Muir was seen to tape his foot. No minor miracle. Batman Robert Scott, Wrecked

Small Speaker Mike Morley and Denise Roughan (a Look Blue Gone Purple) made up Pink Plastic Gods, the day's opening act, while Scott's younger brother, Andy, plays bass in Love in a Gas Oven, a newly surfaced ensemble. Double percussion, very sloppy and promising in a different kind of way. Buffy O'Reilly

**Shazam Suparock Concert**  
Mockers, Netherworld  
Dancing Toys, Wastrels,  
Body Electric  
Christchurch Town Hall,  
May 17.

The evening didn't exactly get off to an ideal start thanks to a muddy sound and a rather ponderous performance from the Body Electric. CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

## On Tape

**A Spanner in the Works No.1**  
(Industrial)

Industrial's first compilation of Auckland music may not be 100 per cent wonderful but it beats the living shit out of previous absurd marketing exercises like *Hauraki Homegrown*. Side One is mostly live, mostly guitar bands and, with the exception of Flak's Dieneke, all bokes. Odd track out is some propagandoodles from a studio fiction of Mason and Bell. Others are Eight Living Legs and Exploding Budgies. Recording quality isn't always great, especially on the Budgies, but the spirit is captured.

Side Two's got a lot more women (Phantom Forth, Vibraslaps, Kim Blackburn) with a cleaner sound, less live stuff and less rock. It's the more successful side for being more adventurous, but then I'm like that.

Hey look, you undiscovered

geniuses, drop Paul Luker a line, he'll understand. RB

**Air Aces Live (Industrial)**

Adam and the Air Aces are a bunch of grizzled old buggers doing what they do best - getting pissed and having a good time playing the blues. This is recorded live at Waikato University and the Aces get the audience involved straight away. 'Anybody pissed yet? Anybody stoned yet?' The Aces are Ralph Bennett, Taranaki Sol, Wayne Wilson, Kevin Thomas and poet Bruce Bisset, who (sort of) holds things together and has a bit of a sing himself. Not all of it appeals to my ear but most of it does - I like Bennett's bloos the best, there's a kinda weird edge. A trimmed-down version of the Aces is currently touring the North Island. This isn't the All Stars, this is a lot more intimate. RB

**The Dolls House (Ima Hitt, 54)**

The Dolls House recorded this live in a pub and it sounds that way. They've taken the unusual step of including four covers among the six songs, apparently because they came out better on the tape than their own songs. They do the covers ('Summertime Blues', 'Jumpin' Jack Flash', etc) pretty well actually, but, you know... 'Isn't It Enough?' by singer guitarist Karl Teten sounds a bit like the Verlaines and is rather likeable. 'Leaving Town' isn't as good but Teten's voice shows a lot of promise. Mainly for mates only, though. RB

**Smarts Legless 2nd Tape**  
(Portobello)

A paint tin... inside... a pair of old underpants (clean), some callous cream, dried peas, a pen, an empty vitamin tube, four golf balls... uh, and the tape. That's limited edition packaging for yer. A tape of 37 songs at an average length of 16.5 seconds might sound a bad idea but the two youths responsible make it work. Short, sharp ideas in living stereo and made-up words. Some of it, of course, is awful. Available only at Real Groovy Records. Hurry

and you might get the one in the shoe. RB

**McNaughton and Crow**  
Suburban Cacophony  
115 Craddock St. Sth Brighton,  
Christchurch 7, 53)

Angus McNaughton and Andrew Crow went into Andrew's bedroom for an unspecified period, did some recording, took the tape to Nightshift Studios to mix it and this is the result. Keyboard noises dominate these five songs but this is no synth-washed tedium. This pair have played with noises in a manner that recalls, the better purveyors of electronic music, and bears a kinship with fellow mainlanders Wreck Small Speakers (etc.). On any terms, okay and for a first effort, very good indeed. RB

**Flipper, Blow'n Chunks (ROIR)**  
Joe 'King' Carrasco  
Tales From the Crypt (ROIR)  
Sex Gang Children  
Ecstasy and Vendetta Over New York (ROIR)

You may have observed a while back my expounding on the merits of American music. Well, it still holds. The ROIR catalogue accompanying these cassettes features a gamut of good Yank and European music around at present, including Bad Brains, Eight Eyed Spy (featuring Lydia Lunch), Human Switchboard and others. For instance, those doyens of San Francisco hardcore, Flipper, have a new release called *Blow'n Chunks*, which was recorded live at CBGB's. It's a rumpus of distortion, of pummeling drums, of meathead adrenalin bursts. Catharsis anyone?

And then there's Joe 'King' Carrasco's *Tales From the Crypt*, an amalgam of Tex-rock, garage-band and Latin swing. Most of the material was recorded as far back as 1979 but it holds up particularly well. The dude's even smart-assed enough to incorporate an organ, which he uses to neat effect on tracks like 'Let's Get Pretty' and 'Monkey Got My Frisbee'. Pure delight with chilli con carne and a nice bottle of red wine.

Last and unfortunately least are Britain's own Sex Gang Children with *Ecstasy and Vendetta Over New York*. Recorded live at Danceteria, it's a performance of astounding limitations. I guess we need examples like this so our judgements become clearer but horrible is horrible, nonetheless.

Anyway, send for a catalogue and sample some of the treats. Write to Reachout International Records, 611 Broadway, Suite 214-T, New York, NY 10012. S.J. Townshend

**MC5, Babes in Arms (ROIR)**

This collection of out-takes, remixes and live tracks traces the 5 from their 1965 debut single, Van Morrison's 'I Can Only Give You Everything' and their first experimental use of feedback in 1966 ('I Just Don't Know'), through the fast and anthemic 'Tonight', 'Shakin' Street' and 'American Ruse', fraught and frantic work-outs like 'Poison', 'Skunk' and the previously unreleased 'Gold', recorded during their final days in London in 1971. And of course an all-amps-on-10 live mix of the classic 'Kick Out the Jams (Motherfuckers)'. Great stuff. If you've never heard of the 5 and wondered where 'power pop' came from, this is a golden opportunity to acquaint yourself with a legend. Available from Reachout International Records, 611 Broadway, Suite 214, NYC, NY 10012, USA for US\$8, plus \$2 postage to NZ. ID

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