

Live

The Nitpickers' Picnic

Kenneth Maidment Theatre, July 23, 24

"This is performance art," said Chris Matthews, and that's pretty much what the Nitpickers' Picnic multi-media arena of violence amounted to.

Te Kani-Kani O Te Rangatahi's vigorously violent images were displayed through three impressive dances. Especially so in 'Short Story', a videogame-like robot battle choreographed by Stephen Bradford.

David Clarkson's one-man play 'Voice' dealt with the abhorrent violence of rape. Telling the true story of a man who raped and tried to kill his mother, it was an intensely dramatic piece. Voices and noises appearing on tape tormented him and violence was expressly explicit. The accusation was that the blame must be shared by all.

The Von Tran Sisters (Annabel Lomas, Maxine Fleming and Andrea Kellard) had the least to do with violence of all the acts. They chose other targets for their satirical sketches, including 'Sodom and Gomorrah', with masks caricaturing Maggie and Liz as potently as any Luck and Flaw creation; and the misadventures of teenage sex as Andrea Kellard performed an excerpt from Sarah Daniel's *Masterpieces*.

The link between visual art, per-



This Kind Of Punishment at the Nitpickers' Picnic (L-R): Johnny Pierce, Chris Matthews, Peter Jefferies, Graham Jefferies.

formance and music was proved by Brian Wills' film. It was one of the highlights of the show. Written description does not do it justice. What sense do images of fire, scratches and dots on film, and men sitting in baths wrestling with eels make on paper? Its different images screened simultaneously on three screens made the films' juxtapositions breathtaking. The dissonant distortion and primal screams of the Headless Chickens' live soundtrack enhanced this. The Headless Chickens themselves appear to reek of evil brooding. Their Noise should attract people in the same way as the media-hyped Jesus and Mary Chain, but theirs is not malicious aggression — it is a true bastardisation of rock.

"Norm Jones taught at my

school, and with his war stories and one leg and one eye or whatever and running for parliament, he was considered a joke ... by TWELVE YEAR-OLDS!" So said the incredulous Chris Knox in the middle of his one man Salivation Army band's version 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. His other song 'How To Die, Part One' was an anti-smack tirade with a different ending on each night. Tuesday was distorted feedback and the kneeling Knox screaming "Ya didn't have to die!" while Wednesday saw Knox (transvestite for a night) under abuse from TKP whilst singing "Row, row, row your boat," sitting on the front of the stage. The grand old man's response to the abuse — "Bloody Chris Matthews — I was in bands when you were just a kid!"

Both nights though, belonged to This Kind Of Punishment. The Jefferies brothers' unique talents now combine with those of Matthews and Pierce to flower in new directions from Nocturnal Projections days and early, confused TKP. There was a raw, exciting edge to TKP's performance as it reached great heights of execution on both nights, especially with 'After The Fact', 'Two Minutes Drowning' and 'The Sleepwalker'.

"You might know this one," said Matthews as TKP returned for an encore, accompanied by Knox and guitar and Michael Lawry on keyboards — the complete incestuous family of This Kind Of Punishment/Headless Chickens/Salivation Army together. Grinning, they lurched into the manic, barely controlled chaos of 'Sister

Ray'. It was a brutal and noisy climax, just as it should have been. Inevitably (so the story goes) the plastic will explode, but ... nitpickers, teddy bears' or whoever's ... Picnics are great.

Paul McKessar

fingers."Man, this is *funky!*" he barked to his similarly kinetic "chick". I wondered quietly how they kept their berets and sunglasses on with all that head shaking.

But indeed, this combo was "funky". I picked out the faces I recognised from the scene — several members of the now-defunct Diatribe, the huge bass guitarist Denis 'Choc' Tuwhare, guitarist Wayne Baird and former Shoeshine Boy and sweet street singer Manu McCarthy ... McCarthy, in a suit cut as sharp as his voice, was the band's leading edge, with assistance from Fiona MacDonald and sax doctor Ross France. The repertoire was soul and funk, mapped out by the vocals and "super-tuff" bass playing.

Seven Deadly Sins

Six Month Club, July 25

The club was "jumping" — even from the top of the brightly-lit stairway that much was evident. The room's requisite darkness had been hustled a few giant strides closer to ultimate myopia by the half-hip haze that habitually hangs over a Campus Radio "disco". Fledgling socialists socialised in murky corners, rubbing shoulders with the five-buck-mixture of Auckland night types, drawn perhaps by the whiff of bohemia that these young intellectuals wore like cheap perfume.

Many, of course, were here simply for the juice and they jostled for position at the tiny bar, their etiquette tempered at one extreme by "nightclub cool" and at the other by the law of the jungle. Others sat at their tables, apparently regarding their surroundings with a detached amusement fuelled, perhaps, by "other substances". And of course on the dancefloor humanity twisted, contorted and "shook" to the insistent be-bop sounds.

Abruptly, the beat "died" and the stage lights came up. Into the colourful beams stepped the club's star turn for the night, a new conglomeration from the swinging scene called Seven Deadly Sins. They launched into their first "groove" and immediately the youth next to me began shaking his head and clicking his

As with the best of this urban "style" of music, the sensation was sweeter and the groove "groovier" when the urgency was on. Let-downs came in the form of the odd dull horn arrangement or vaguely jazzy glide of the type that so often let Diatribe down. But this was a first performance, after all. Highlights included a Norman Whitfield-inspired interpretation of Herbs' 'Anzania' ("wild" guitar) and the closing version of the SOS Band's 'Just Be Good To Me', which emphasised vocal harmonies rather than the original's gorgeous-but-unattainable studio groove.

As the band slipped off the stage to be swallowed amongst their peers, the recorded rhythms resumed — it was time to go. As I "stumbled" down the stairs and into the crisp, clean night air I resolved that some other evening I would re-enter the smoky, sleazy, stylish world of the club scene. Yes, I would "git down".

"Le" Russell Brown

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