

Live

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prizes go to spectacle; a conch-shell *duet* by Ritchie and the keyboardist, a jaw-dropping version of the *Batman* theme, the feats of sudden tempo-change like a jet pulling out of a nosedive. "We got our first gold disc ever in *this country!*" announces Ritchie. Whaaaay ...

Afterwards, the air outside His Majesty's was not significantly cooler than it was inside and the crowd left smiling and calm; the several pairs of police standing outside were just standing, thanks.

The only thing more heartwarming than a good performance is an audience that can have fun and still keep its head. There was no alcohol at the gig either; now isn't life full of stange co-incidences? **Chad Taylor**

The Chills, Bird Nest Roys, Headless Chickens

Gluepot, Jan 31, Feb 1
So ... the last sight of Chills No.9, a lineup that achieved a hell of a lot materially whilst flying on clipped creative wings. Also the first NZ gigs since departing for England in early November. Really good Chills performances had become a rare item in the months preceding the big venture — and at the end of Friday night, it seemed things, if anything, had

gotten worse. Martin Phillipps typically bust a gut and a string or two and there was the odd highlight (notably a buzzy 'Leather Jacket') but the Chills ran a clear, flat third to their support bands. The next night was a wholly different story, but for now:

The Headless Chickens: Chris Matthews, Michael Lawry and Johnny Pierce, do their homework. Ticked off with taped drum tracks (presumably Matthews' handiwork), their songs travel precisely over little novellas of noise and quiet. Um, *little?* Relatively long and complex actually, but very much songs nonetheless — lyrics, melodies, refrains and so on. The Headless Chickens mixed, for want of better words, things arty and things rock 'n' roll with appealing disregard for which was which. Provocative, very intense and very good, they did not impress those in the crowd who had come to hear 'Dole drums'. Having no live drummer was a major factor in being so consistently good — but just maybe the right drummer would let 'em take off into the realms of organic word'rousness every now and then.

Bird Nest Roys don't do a lot of homework and they act up like hell in class and it seems almost everyone likes them. With a big, warm, chaotic sound that was miles away from their wimpy debut EP, they had what ranked as one of their better nights. The songs are eccentric and tasty, almost inseparable from the band; a refrain like "I've got empty animals for you / Wrap it up!" (from the great 'Love') makes perfect sense when you see them. Extra fun was gleaned from Shayne Carter's appearance on very noisy guitar for the final two songs. I believe the expression is that they Beasted the Beast ...

Whilst the two support bands were marginally less good on the Saturday night, the Chills were kaleidoscope worlds better than they'd been. I should mention here that I'm reviewing from right up against the stage here — the expensively remodelled Gluepot doesn't carry sound much further than the old model, and the out-front mix was again showbizzy and bottom-heavy. That's a worry — the last thing we want is for the Chills to start sounding like the Nars.

But off the stage all was glorious noise. As has often been the case, the first set was an enjoya-

ble build-up to the second. And the second set was ... awesome. Sparks flew, *everyone* in the band played full-tilt and the songs sounded the way you knew they should. Highlights? Just about everything, but perhaps especially 'Frozen Fountain', some welcome new tricks from Alan Haig in 'Pink Frost', a fiery resurrected 'Smile From A Dead, Dead Face' and the closing 'I Saw Your Silhouette', glitch and all.

"We demand a lot and a little from our bands. Presentation, tightness, slickness and so on don't matter for shit, and even things like good songs, energy and originality take a back seat to the thing that makes good bands from this country great bands and good gigs great gigs. That's the ability to really move, the sense of emotional investment so clear in gigs by the likes of, say, Goblin Mix. D'you call it Soul? Magic? Trotting that out night after night almost seemed to have bled the Chills of it, but this Last Night was nothing if not reassuring.

The Chills will hopefully re-emerge with two new, enthusiastic members, and I imagine it'll be good watching them find their feet, work out what they are and *move on*. They'll again have to deal with people and systems who regard them only as entertainment and they'll have to keep growing out as they go up and there'll be people who'll still insist they've sold bloody out and they've got to get things together on record ... but with a heart as big as a house, I think the Chills can do what they want to.

Russell Brown

Look Blue Go Purple, Verlaines, Pterodactyls, Roy Montgomery
Chippendale House, Dunedin, Dec 31.

Chippendale House is a big commercial building in Dunedin that has been (and is still being) set up as an arts resource centre. Most of the action thus far has involved music, with live performances and a four-track recording studio, but it is also intended to cater for the rest of the arts with a part-time gallery, etc. It is run by and for a collective of mostly young people and aims to make things easier for those with something creative to offer. Anyone can join Chippendale House for \$5 and share in it. And also take

responsibility for it. Some people did not do that on this night ...

There was excitement (not to mention a good deal of purple haze) in the air when David Merritt took the mike to declare the evening open and introduce the first act, a cowpoke from the plains of Canterbury called Roy Montgomery. "Wh'never ah put on this here hat ah jest start talkin' this way," explained Roy touching the brim of his stetson. There followed a short bracket of country songs dedicated to the memory of the great Hank Williams, and maybe a coupla not-so-country songs done the way Hank woulda done it. Funny and serious, like country music so very is. Who sez good guys wear white?

Look Blue Go Purple got on the stage pretty fast, but in the humid hall tuning problems set in after just one song and they seemed to spend about half their set gazing fixedly at each other going *twang ... twong ...* The Androids tuneup lives on. When they played songs they were as good as usual, much more physical than the record, pushing out music in big melodic swells.

The Verlaines had one of those nights called 'The Verlaines On A Good Night'. Near-faultless without any apparent sacrifice in energy, they did justice to most everything they played. Particularly noteworthy were the rhythm section's sheer *grunt* and Graeme Downes' singing. Even with only a tiny vocal PA they managed to sound colossal when they wanted to. By popular demand, 'Lying In State' was the song that took us into 1986. Euphoric. Best live band in the country at present.

Things spiralled downhill from the end of the Verlaines' set. The audience became aware of the jerks the unfortunate organisers had been trying to deal with for the past hour or so. People trying to take knives inside, even producing them, people who didn't seem to be able to not try and inflict violence on somebody around them. The lights had to come up and the unfortunate Pterodactyls only got to play about 20 minutes. The magic was broken.

It has to be said that the sole body of people responsible for ruining the evening were "boots", "skins", whatever. The kind who are too fucked up to have any fun and stagger through the lives of the people who *can* and fuck them up. It seems No Idea had been play-

ing at the Oriental but the crowd did enough damage for the management to close the pub down early and call the police, so they had to go somewhere else to not have fun.

Now you can't blame a band for its audience, but similar macho moronicism went on when No Idea played in Auckland recently; not even heat-of-the-moment slamming, but simple, chilling pack intimidation. Stopping playing when there's a fight is one thing, but if No Idea's much-trumpeted political principles mean *anything*, they have to bring pressure to bear on people like this to shape up or be ostracised. After all, these people look like them and identify with them. It's very easy to write 'Rugger Bugger' but how about 'Macho Punk Wanker' for a song title? It should also be noted that the Chippendale House Collective is the epitome of the whole anarcho-punk philosophy. Isn't it?

So, a great night with a fizzer of an ending for those who paid their monies, and a stupid, miserable one for the people who had to look after the door. There was the very best and the very worst of what could happen. Let's hope for the best from now on.

Russell Brown

Harem Scarem Dogman EP

Au-Go-Go

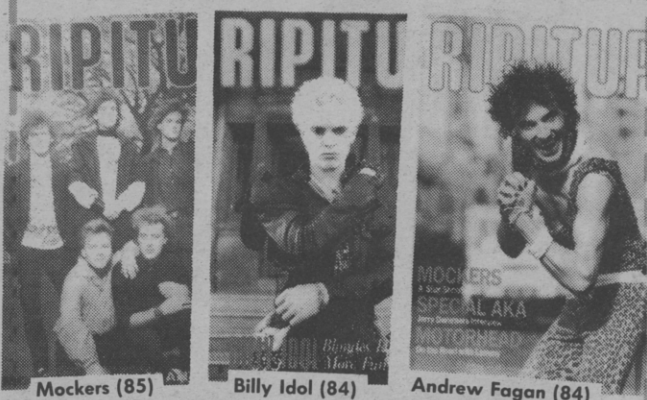
Rough and raucous, Melbourne's Harem Scarem are obviously part of what Mark Seymour referred to as the "Aussie R&B tradition", relying pretty much on a straight R&B base for *Dogman* (almost 30 minutes long — hardly yer average eepee).

The best track, 'Figurehead', is an amazing seven and a half minute workout sounding particularly Doors-inspired and reminiscent of the Birthday Party's most blues-sodden moments. It features Mark Seymour on tambourine and backing vocals, while his fellow Hunter-Collector John Archer produced four of the five tracks. The non-Archer production number is a raw live recording, 'Sweet Thing Desire'.

All fine stuff, and almost worth having for 'Figurehead' alone. Imported and available through EMI retail stores.

Paul McKessar

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