

# Performance

## MICK JAGGER Gluepot, November 3

There was no way I was going to stand in the crowd at Western Springs so Mick Jagger's decision to play Auckland's Gluepot two nights before his main gig suited me and 599 other people just fine. He might be old, he might hang up on journalists, he might be only one-fifth of the Stones but this was a buzz, no doubting it.

At the press conference that afternoon Jagger was a small man with teenager's hips and a very big head for his size (Joe Satriani, a broad man, had lower legs as thin as other people's wrists). Mick didn't look much like Mick Jagger, not until he smiled anyway. But when he walked on stage at the Gluepot (savour that: when Mick came on at the Gluey...) he was the Jagger you saw on TV; the snarling, finger-waving, strutting stick-man, without manners or aitches.

The band opened with two numbers before ploughing into the evening's best song, a furiously funky cover of James Brown's 'Sex Machine'. Jagger adopted the honky chicken strut while the three female backing vocalists poured on the hot sauce. A following rendition of 'Foxy Lady' was outrageous, stomping along the thin line between funk and camp. The band were a wall of blues; there was no room for solos, although a couple were attempted. The Stomach Pumps backing trio of Carol Kenyon, Valerie Scott and Jenny Douglas were shrill and vicious above the mayhem, and together with Jagger they sliced and diced on 'It's Only Rock And Roll.' But the best Stones song was 'Brown Sugar' — Jagger kicked it around the room like an old football.

Satriani chugged through Keith Richards' chords with the faithful relish of a covers musician. Were the band as good as the Stones? A weird question

to ask an audience who would have never seen the Stones live, except on TV and film. It was good to see Jagger relieved of his big-venue obligations; he didn't have to run back and forth over a mile-wide stage throwing himself around like an emu on uppers. And where else but the Gluepot could one push to the front of the crowd in a matter of minutes? Ultimately it was only rock and roll. But I liked it. Liked it. Yes I did.

CHAD TAYLOR

## THE VERLAINES Oriental, Oct 21

Welcome to the christening... first time for the Verlaines part six and the Oriental is filling with the masses, long starved of such a treat. Beer jugs and cigarettes and a three piece band. This is it. All over again.

The Alistair Galbraith fronted Plagal Grind are on first. Songs are long and written in his familiar pulsing style, surging with power from apparent bathos only to shortly after die again. Previous gigs had swayed dangerously close to dirge, but this time there's not even a residual trace of pointless noise. Peter Jeffries is manic on drums, all over the place in a systematic sort of way. He turns the sticks around and hits with the handles. Hard.

Madonna's over the PA and Graeme Downes is nervous. He accepts good luck but hopes he won't need it. 'Widow Blues' the first song, the first of eight new ones. The next night they'll play something like 11. The cheers come easy. Downes smiles, everything's okay. Now he can sweat. Soon strings will be broken in anger and guitars will require tuning between songs as it all comes back.

Mike Stoodley, the new guy, leans back a bit into the relaxation mode. His bass fingers do it all right and a bit more. Confident? Yep. He knows he's doing a good job. Robbie Yeats is, well... Robbie Yeats. Heads bowed and getting faster, or delicate in his restraint. It's everything you ever wanted in a Verlaines gig (except 'Death And The

Maiden' which will be tomorrow night's encore) — 'Pyromaniac', 'Bird Dog', 'Icarus Missed', 'Baud To Tears'.

'It Was Raining' can still be drawn as carefully as its vinyl translation. 'Goes Forever'. Stops. Downes breathes. No worries about getting the next note, he's never had the use of a live voice this good. 'Slow Sad Love Song' is another demonstration, from wailing melancholy to white-hot fury. Faultless transition. The power of the final onslaught induces some into a mild pogo.

It has been said (often by some people) that for a three-piece, the Verlaines have a remarkable live horns section. It's hard to quantify the abstract but the horns are there, phasing in when you expect them. C.D. Jimmy Jazz and Me. Soft foundation, subtle backing, the horns are playing, the song's being made.

Nothing's really changed, but hey... it's bloody good to have you back.

SEAN FLAHERTY

## TOWNES VAN ZANDT, AL HUNTER Wellington, October 27

A New Zealand appearance by one of the most revered contemporary songwriters is a rare treat, and the 150 or so of Wellington's country cognoscenti who paid their \$15 (!) looked like an intelligent lot. However their babble never let up, and because of an inadequate PA the concert was an effort for performers and listeners alike. Al Hunter should have felt at home in the town that was smart enough to snap up the neon cowboy sign abandoned by Queen St, but his discomfort singing to a crowd of disinterested conversationalists was reflected in a hesitant performance. If the crowd had been paying attention, they might have noticed amongst the songs from *Neon Cowboy*, a new, moving Hunter original, 'Final Curtain', that bodes well for the follow-up.

But if Hunter looked uncomfortable, Townes Van Zandt looked as if he didn't want to be there. Van Zandt is as lean

as a rake and looks as delicate as Hank Williams. He wore a worried look throughout the concert, but sang in the best country voice I've heard live: warm, rich, real. Songs from his recent album *At My Window* dominated, each one aching with melancholy — the chilling 'Snowing on Raton', laconic 'Blue Wind Blew' and resigned title track.

Van Zandt's acoustic guitar was superbly complemented by the exquisite playing of fellow Texan Mickey White. His Spanish influenced lines emphasised and developed the passionate, swaying melodies. Included were many blues tunes, the spellbinding 'Snake Mountain Blues', 'Lightning Hopkins', 'Short Haired Woman Blues' that Townes accurately labelled as "weird," and his own grinding 'Gone, Gone Blues'. White's slide work was stunning, but he came out of his shell further to yodel 'Waitin' On A Train' ("A song I wrote when I was performing under the name of Jimmie Rodgers") and dazzle with his folksy picking on a Richard Dobson song.

Van Zandt, looking weary and ill at ease, returned for two encores, including (at the insistence of a drunk hippie) a re-run of his 'Poncho And Lefty' made famous by Willie 'n' Merle; at least she didn't request 'Sweet Home Alabama.' But difficulties aside, it was a solid performance by a musician who's had his troubles ("I wrote this about Janis Joplin. She was a friend of mine.") but whose reputation is well deserved. The heartiest accolades though must go to Real Groovy, whose altruistic promotion of obscure legends demands support — and audience attention.

CHRIS BOURKE

## BRYAN FERRY Mt Smart Big Top Tuesday October 25

The pandas weren't the only big softies to arrive in town on Labour weekend. Bryan Ferry boasted a similar charm live; a flick of the wrist, and the crowds went wild.

Graham Brazier opened solo, entertaining the Big Tent crowd with cover versions and originals before toasting them with a beer and wishing everyone a good night. Ferry's band walked on an hour or so later. Roxy mainstays Neil Hubbard (guitar) and Andy Newmark (drums) were joined by new faces and an old voice — Yanick Etienne, the tiny lady whose vocals graced the recent Roxy and solo Ferry albums.

The band opened with a thundering couplet of 'Limbo' and 'The Chosen One' before slipping into 'Windswept' and 'Casanova'. Ferry, draped like a mad Dickensian, sang flanked by two bo'd vocalists Edhah Holt and Michelle Cobbs. He seemed hesitant for the first part of the show as Newmark skipped over a few crucial beats and Jeff Thall (guitar) played some rotten lead breaks. Some songs were perfect, others were played quite poorly — a sign of fatigue after a busy tour of Japan? It was an odd blend.

Neil Hubbard and Luico Hopper (bass) held much of the set together. When Ferry took to the keyboards he played better than Clifford Carter, and when he threw a switch for a computer to accompany him for a swift 'Wasteland' it was chill proof that it Bryan Ferry was creating the evening's mood, not the band.

Ferry himself started working up a sweat after the first half. The audience sat dutifully through 'Casanova' but went wild for 'Slave To Love' and the other solo Ferry singles, 'Windswept', 'Don't Stop The Dance' and 'Kiss And Tell'. 'The Right Stuff' was conspicuous by its absence; having tried out the song during the soundcheck that afternoon, all had decided it was not yet up to scratch — a reminder that we were seeing a band who were new to each other. Apart from 'Jealous Guy' Ferry left his huge covers catalogue untouched, choosing instead to rework 'Do The Strand' and 'In Every Dream Home A Heartache'.

By the end of the set the band were in check. Jeff Thall improved his lot by

simply not playing. Yanick Etienne turned in a spectacular vocal for 'Avalon'. Ferry, Neil Hubbard and the dancing Holt and Cobbs worked their butts off (literally). Ferry was happiest behind his keyboards for 'Ladytron', and delighted with the Mt Smart audience who hung on his every move. He was in good voice and good spirits but the bitters end was that at least half the band were resting on his laurels. Right from Roxy's start, Bryan Ferry has always made it clear that he's the only one allowed to relax on stage, and he shouldn't amend the rule now.

CHAD TAYLOR

## SMEGMA, THE RATTLESNAKES, THE PSYCHODAISIES Standard Club November 28

The Standard Club is located somewhere in Parnell. It's small, and even its greatest supporters have been known to describe it as acoustically unworkable, but its unique atmosphere makes it likely to become one of the top venues for young alternative bands in Auckland.

Tonight was Garage night and the club was jam-packed full of happy punters, eager to check out the 60s influenced thrash.

First up was Smegma, a young and obviously inexperienced four-piece. Although they didn't blow anyone's mind away, Smegma contained some very competent musicians and showed considerable potential as a musical entity. A few more gigs and a few more months in the practice room could well turn this band into something worth seeing.

The Rattlesnakes, up second, introduced an interesting concept of a bass-less three piece. Although their music was fairly derivative there were one or two standout songs and I basically enjoyed their set and their unique lineup. It was probably the narcissistic lead singer's abusive rantings (in a phoney American accent) that made the audience hate them so



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