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and black inner space outfits they produced the necessary visual impact to enhance their often excellent material.

The cream of their debut was dished out, 'Pre-Fab Hearts', 'Love Will Find A Way', and 'Baby's In the Know', and a version of Jim Reeves' 'According To My Heart' and their own 'Kitchenman' assured maximum audience interest.

The weekend's most unusual success spot, the Reels must be seen. **George Kay**

The world is full of angry young men who wish to inflict their misery on others through music. Such are the Gordons, who, like a few too many others, have taken PIL to their hearts. They think they can achieve something similar by playing depressing dirges. All their ugly noise succeeded in doing was driving people away.

Herbs, a reggae band from Ponsonby, were a touch of sunnier music that had so far been missing from the main stage. They opened strongly with Third World's '96 Degrees' and gave a reprisal for an encore, their smooth harmonies drifting happily across the amphitheatre. It's a pleasure to hear some original ethnic music, and Herbs were thanked warmly for it.

It was Reel To Real's last gig, ending what's been a frustrating time for a band with more than a few good ideas. Maybe they just tried too hard to be too clever, so let's hope the individual members re-emerge.

Taste Of Bounty have struggled hard to stay together for the past three years, but their efforts now seem to be paying off. Their roots lie in jazz and blues, though some of their compositions betray a hint of 60's acid rock. This shows particularly in the vocals of Mahia Samuels, who at times displayed a touch of Grace Slick. They're writing some excellent songs now, and rewards for their hard work may not be too far off.

Spys are about to leave for Australia, embittered by promoters whom they claim are not giving them a fair chance to put their music across. At Sweetwaters, they sounded like they were trying to stay trendy by ripping off Police licks. Proficient, but not very original. Maybe they should re-examine their sound instead of walking around with chips on their shoulders. **Duncan Campbell**

The Rodents are a nine piece professional rock'n'roll band from Wellington who showed bands twice their age and experience the way out. With unerring skill and feeling they romped through your favourite Tamla and Stax numbers with a panache that almost eclipsed the originals.

'In the Midnight Hour' and 'Take Me To the River' were worked out with authority and their couple of originals combined realism and rock-steady stealth. The brass section was tight and sensibly kept within the abilities but it was lead

vocalist Peter Marshall whose sheer intuitive interpretations were little short of sensational. Future assured. **George Kay**

The departure of sax player Dave Spillane and guitarist Simon Lynch late last year has caused a dramatic change in the Valentinos' music. The combination of Spillane's sax and Lynch's guitar gave the Valentinos a sweet sound that lifted them above your run of the mill pub band. Ex-Flight X7 man Paul Jamieson had the difficult task of replacing both of them. Unfortunately, he doesn't do it at all well. Sure, front man Paul Robinson still does his job with sophistication, but behind him Jamieson contributed heavy metal licks that turned most songs into dirges.

'I Can't Help Myself' was by far the best single to come out of Australia last year. The Icehouse album that followed was as disappointing as the single was exciting. The question that remained was whether the Flowers could make that material work on stage.

As the band hit the stage, they were greeted by a barrage of toilet rolls. Launching straight into 'Send Somebody', they came on with the sort of aggressive militance that you would expect from a band of such high reputation. Sadly, as the show progressed, the energy began to dim. But the Flowers received ever-increasing response as they ran through the whole of their album and a few new songs.

The live version of 'I Can't Help Myself' sounded limp, while the new Australian single, 'Walls', benefited immensely from its live treatment. It wasn't until the encore that the band's real on-stage energy came on display in a blistering version of Iggy's 'Funtime'.

Cold Chisel came here with the reputation of being the hottest live act in Australia. On the strength of Monday's performance it's hard to argue. Jimmy Barnes' vodka-soaked voice bellows, "This one's for the f**kers up on the hill" as the band tears into 'Standing On The Outside'. The crowd rage and miscellaneous items fly through the air. It has taken Chisel no longer than ten minutes to whip up a frenzy.

The band rip through virtually their whole song book. 'Star Hotel' brings a roar of approval, as does 'Cheap Wine'. By the time Chisel leave the stage, the punters are going crazy. A few minutes later keyboard player Don Walker and guitarist Ian Moss return for an idyllic rendition of 'Georgia' — the calm before the storm. The whole band returns, and delivers an encore of no less than half an hour. Old classics 'Light My Fire' and 'Knocking On Heaven's Door' receive a well-timed dusting off, and during 'Goodbye Astrid', Barnes plunges into the crowd, closely followed by assorted roadies and microphone leads.

The fact that Cold Chisel managed to inject such excitement into a crowd tired and sore after four days is a tribute to their power as a major rock act. Pissed off you left early? Serves you right. **Mark Phillips**



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