

The Cure
Auckland Town Hall,
July 31.

Rock bands with artistic aspirations tend to skate on very thin ice, especially when their audience doesn't quite see their work in the same light.

The Cure, three very serious young men, must have felt perturbed by their Auckland fans, who yelled, screamed and bounced around like they would at any other concert. Disconcerting when you're trying to make a statement.

When the show moved, the punters loved it. 'Primary', 'A Forest', 'Jumping On Someone Else's Train' and 'Killing An Arab' went down a storm. But Robert Smith has a passion for weighty slices of Gothic doom, and some of the more turgid pieces from *Faith* were wisely dressed up with spectacular lighting so people didn't lose interest.

The Cure actually sound better for reverting to their original three-piece format. Smith and Simon Gallup both play hand and foot synthesisers, and Lol Tolhurst produces an awesome array of percussion sounds. The band rocked much harder than it did here last year, though a lot of this was due to vastly increased volume.

The opening movie, *Carnage Visors*, seemed to consist of a bunch of animated Lego toys moving aimlessly about. Confusing, yet strangely absorbing, and like the headline attraction, you were left wondering what the point of it all was.

Screaming Blam-matic Roadshow

Otago University, July 27

The much-touted Screaming Blam-matic tour hit Dunedin at the end of last month and left a few new fans and revised opinions. Post-gig opinion, especially from the young punks, was that the Meemees carried the night. They were first on and since I last saw them (Sweetwaters) they've made big improvements in the musicianship department, and their songs, although still rough and lively, are neater and more definable. Still a fan.

The Newmatics, two saxophonists in tow, are NZ's ska clones and on the night they had to work hard to regain lost momentum caused through a broken guitar string. Lead singer Mark Clare with his

Dexys' jacket, injected all he had into an on-the-spot shank that moved the audience physically but failed to reach the soul. On a good night I'm sure they can hold their own but this time out they missed.

Revised opinion time. Blam Blam Blam at Sweetwaters were too precious and self-consciously artful to let themselves rock'n'roll. That criticism no longer applies. In the Union they gave a performance rich with ideas and excitement. Their songs are now durable. Sure, they still owe their rent to the Gang of Four and other academics, but they've trained their music into an intelligent and locally relevant toughness. Best of the night, minority opinion.

George Kay

New Entrants, Missing Tremble Rumba Bar, July 25.

Missing Tremble have been alive 4 months, and in that time developed a repertoire of about 15 songs weeded out from an initial 30 originals. They're a relief. A witty threesome with promise of things to come. Rumba dancers appreciated it.

Bill MacRae and Bob Shephard swap guitar, bass, keyboards and vocals, while Steve Duffels on drums provides a strong base for the two frontmen to work from.

The sound wasn't as good as it could have been, however this was just gig number six, and it can only improve. Generally they're blessed with a crisp delivery. The songs vary from straight instrumentals 'B Tune', and 'Stupid Key', to commentaries 'Dictionary of Love', and 'A Clue'. Missing Tremble do their own song on that current theme of 9 to 5 living and what it does to your brain. Shephard gets it across.

The New Entrants are more at ease on stage now. They follow a tested, tried and true blend of covers and their own songs. They don't cross any boundaries, but you can move to them.

Vocalist Tony Johns has flashes of conviction. He sings 'Lives' with feeling, and in Entrants' compositions 'Violent Night', and 'Scarlet Scarab' he tries a bit of saxophone while guitarist Craig Smith Pilling takes over on vocals. The sax is a welcome bonus, no matter how tentative. Variety otherwise comes from Smith Pilling's band and Dave Wilkinson's guitar work. Dave

Major scoots around mid stage on bass, and Tony's brother Andy is the beat.

The floor is packed for the second set, which includes notable versions of the Members' 'Sally', and the Gang of Four's 'Damaged Goods'.

New Entrants have earned a place, but they'll need a couple of cards up their sleeve if they intend to stick around.

AnnLouise Martin

The Pedestrians, Gladstone

"Don't get in the way of the pedestrian", sings Stewart with considerable justification. The Pedestrians are much more than the average Christchurch three-piece (of which there is a plague at the time of writing).

Musically, they are hard to fault — combining, as they do, the flash of the Solitudes and the exuberance of the Surge or Mainly Spaniards and adding a depth of perception not to be discerned in the works of any of the above except the last.

In specific terms, Pedestrians' music radiates outwards from Kevin Stone's punchy bass lines. Drums and vocals follow naturally but then come the guitar parts. These flow from peerless rhythm playing to strikingly melodic and, for the most part improvised lead and back again.

Like their music, the group's lyrics at first hearing seem not only accessible but a trifle conventional as well. But it could be claimed that 'Pedestrian', 'Traffic Light' and 'Looking Out a Window' evince a sympathy for the white-collar ethos unique in rock, certainly in Christchurch. One song in particular, 'On the Balcony', must be singled out for splendid lyrical irony.

On stage, too, the Pedestrians make their mark. Kevin's static and apparently nervous figure provides a foil for Stewart's manic cavortings and Townshendesque windmill arm-movements. This dichotomy extends to their stage apparel. Kevin dresses in the usual jeans and T-shirt, while Stewart's taste runs to dress shirts, loose-fitting trousers and a truly stupendous red cardy ("\$40 that cost me!").

The Pedestrians are determined. Like many local bands, they hope to do a 45 this year. Chances are they'll succeed, because unlike most of their peers, they don't have to try to be special — they already are.

Coup D'Etat, Spaces Mainstreet, August 2

Seats to go round, and plenty to spare. Enough room on the dance floor to call it a luxury. Appropriately enough, Spaces start with 'Sitting in Uneasy Comfort'.

The band is known in northern parts through the current single of limited airplay 'Just Like Clockwork', and soon to be released is reggae-based number 'Disadvantage'.

Vocalist Warren Hydes leads the band with a rough, jumpy energy. Don Ray on keys adds sax, and bassoon on several tracks, giving a dark, rich feel to the band's total sound, especially on 'My Interpretation'.

By the final 'Everyone is Certain Sad', Spaces were moving fast, but the reward was negligible. The audience seemed baffled as to how to react to 45 minutes of solid rock.

Coup D'Etat are at the other

end of the scale. The band still drags them in, and Harry Lyon held it together without too many good-natured sighs after every song. It's smooth and professional, with keyboards man Murray Hancox taking a lot lower profile than Jan Preston.

'Not Responsible' was one of the afternoon's better tunes. Lyon shouts and whistles in an almost Brazilian sound. Doctor I Like Your Medicine' was tired but the fans are young, and loyal, and no doubt got what they were after.

AnnLouise Martin

BRIEFS



Modern Eon Fiction Tales (DinDisc)

A Liverpool five-piece. The vocals come at you Jon Anderson-like as if from a Himalayan mist, while keyboards flourish down below — and the relentless backbeat makes you understand how this band were able to replace their injured drummer on a recent Stranglers' tour with a tape machine. At times, Modern Eon seem to be merely developing ideas, but when they get down to writing songs — on Side Two especially — then things get a lot more interesting. Try 'Child's Play' and the Cure-like spinning 'Euthenics'.

Robert Fripp The League of Gentlemen (E.G.)

Virtuoso Fripp's latest is as good a dance album as any released this year. The League's rhythm team, bassist Sara Lee and either Johnny Toobad or Kevin Wilkinson on drums, lay down a frantic beat, over which Fripp and former XTC keyboard whizz Barry Andrews weave scalding, cascading lines. The League recall the compulsive danceability of early Talking Heads or XTC. This album is

only marred by the conversational collages, 'Indiscreet 1-3', initially humorous, but tedious after repeated playings.

Where Is Hank, XL Capris (Stunn)

Aussies love it. I don't. Will that do? You want more? OK ... The title track is really good and very different from the rest (it's the only one written and sung by the drummer). It's also the only track that includes Todd Hunter, the album's producer. The fact that he's since joined them as a guitarist could bode well for them.

The Phantoms (Primitive Music)

New Zealand's first indie cassette it says here. Sub-title 'Fun For The Home Recordist Who Likes The Residents And Setting Fire To Cats'. Confused? The sub-title is mine, not theirs, and yes I'm confused. Bits of music, but only bits, drift through this melange of overdubs, backwards noise and (could they have dared?) the vocal effects you get when inhaling hydrogen. Still confused? Play this between the latest PiL album and any radio news bulletin and it will suddenly make sense. You can get it for \$6.50 from Primitive Records, 76 Mary St, Christchurch.

Fusion Can't Trust A King (Ocean Cassette)

Despite the name, Fusion is not some American jazz-rock hybrid, but a guitar-based outfit from Taranaki. What they actually sound like is a bunch of hippies in some late sixties time warp. There's some smooth-flowing, punchy songs here; strong vocals, too. It's a pity they're undercut by shoddy production.

David Hollis, Caught Alive

This is the album with the hand-painted cover that could turn into a J.D. Blackfoot for the nation's second-hand dealers with Hollis swearing he'll destroy the master after the initial run. Hollis' songs are English-derived folk, and he widens the appeal of the album with some fine supportive acoustic guitar — 'Dharma' being the showcase.

'BEAT' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 have over-compensated on some tracks as regards speed but we were desperate not to do something similar to the first LP."

And so to the track that most directly concerns us, the 'Dream Home In NZ' number, a provocative and vaguely ethereal song that has a sting in its tail.

"The idea came from an American TV quiz show. American TV has a great influence on us and they have an awful lot of quiz shows where you win a car and somebody faints. It seemed that the prize that everybody wanted was to get away from this dreadful pressure. You can feel it in America, and even more in Britain at the moment, and looking at the map, it seemed that New Zealand was so far away from the Russian and American missiles and it seemed a good place to go. The song is just about wanting to be a long way away from the way we run our lives in Europe."

There's two more New Zealand calls waiting for Wakeling but I slip in a last question. At the beginning of the year the Specials and the Beat played Belfast. I ask Wakeling, being an Englishman, if he feels responsible for the mess in Ireland:

"Of course. When you get to Belfast you can feel very, very embarrassed about having an English accent. You feel like saying sorry to everybody you meet in the street. It was a very emotional gig and one of the best that we'd done, a fabulous atmosphere. No fights, I think we'll go back."

The Beat are coming here towards the end of the year. "I'll come and stay in your dream home," quips Wakeling.

"You're more than welcome," I reply. Of that there's surely no doubt.

George Kay

Breaking Glass
Director: Brian Gibson

A *Star is Born* in punk garb. Poor Hazel O'Connor achieves wonders in this almost unbelievably naive tale that piles cliché upon cliché. Unfortunately, she is not matched by Phil Daniels who proves yet again, as if *Quadrophenia* wasn't enough, that he has the dynamic appeal of a stick insect. Even John Finch, as the super-producer, acts as if he were on a heavy barbiturate diet. The only positive touches are a flamboyantly spectacular/silly neon number when the heroine makes her Rainbow debut just before the n-e-r-v-o-u-s b-r-e-a-k d-o-w-n, and some pleasant, albeit MOR songs.

Motel Hell
Director: Kevin Connor

A stylish exercise in black humour as the owners of a Southern small-town motel take to guest-farming as a way to give their ham and small goods a singular flavour. Rory Calhoun as the religious fanatic motelier, and Nancy Parsons as his obese "Sister Ida" (a 16-stone omnivore in denim overalls and ponytails) give beautifully-turned performances, and even Wolfman Jack offers a cameo as a somewhat unconventional man of the cloth. This is not forgetting neat parodies of Romero's Zombie films when the human vegetables walk the night intent on revenge, and Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* as the hero and villain have their final duel in the meat-room. And then there is a hysterically bizarre scene where two would-be "swingers" allow themselves to be bound and gagged ready for "planting", totally unaware that it isn't all part of a "swinger's motel" everynight service. Watch out for this one, and don't even consider a motel at Westfield.

Excalibur
Director: John Boorman

The battle of the blockbusters as *Star Wars* meets *Camelot*. Burne-Jones inspired visuals and lashings of Wagner and Carl Orff on the soundtrack, as Boorman treads the same ground that both Bresson and Rohmer have already tackled within the last few years. Nicol Williamson, in a fey performance as Merlin, is the touchstone to the film's success, for when he is involved and the mood is either magical or humorous, it all works perfectly. Alas, as soon as we are left with the triangle of Arthur-Guinivere-Lancelot, the pace slackens and the film's 136 minutes wear their welcome rather thin. The royal couple's rustic accents fit uncomfortably with their roles, and what was obviously intended to be genuinely moving doesn't quite make it on the emotional level Boorman was aiming at. An interesting failure.

William Dart

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