

Live

Propeller Benefit Mainstreet, August 15.

First up, Days Centrale and it's a little worrying to see that they haven't progressed a whole lot since their promising debut earlier this year. They're tighter for sure, but every time singer Vicky Cain struggles to reach a note their major problem shows up again. Cain has a strong voice and wonderful stage presence but she simply can't sing high enough for most of the songs. Tuition or a reworking of songs would seem to be in order. A rather cluttered sound didn't help either. What-

ever, Days Centrale do have that Youth Pop Excitement and that's a big head start.

I had big fears for the Miltown Stowaways after the loss of Fiona Anderson but with the switch to one lead vocalist there's a cohesiveness that hasn't been present before. There also seems to be a little more force behind their playing - even the silly 'Forest Rangers' demanded attention. 'Strong and True' still doesn't sound like the best single choice, however. I think the Stowaways will be worth watching, if only for Ben Staples' stand-up drumming.

Unless I'm mistaken, Terror of Tinytown presented the curious spectacle of a band that is getting worse, not better. The neo-Latin riddims they were playing earlier this year have been flattened out, they're starting to sound like synthesiser bands are "supposed"



Julian Hansen, Terror of Tinytown.

to. It doesn't seem as much fun any more.

But, even after all these months, the crowd was there for the Meemees. And it was fun. The mistakes just seemed to emphasise the spontaneity of it all. Most of the old affectations were still there, but the Meemees were trying harder than they have for a long time. There were times when the Meemees defined Youth Pop Excitement. It was a most certainly OK performance, even without 'Pointy Ears'.

Many might envy Coconut Rough's rapid rise to prominence but that rise has meant an almost impossible pressure to deliver. In early gigs I got the impression they were almost trying too hard. But this night's performance was a definite improvement. The more confidence they have in what they're doing, the better they'll be.

The Swimming Pools were playing to a tired house by the time they came on. They didn't exactly perk things up, with over-dense, somewhat homogenous

pop. There's plenty of potential but some better songs need to be written before frontman John Purvis can stop looking like he's making a lot of fuss about very little.

Russell Brown

Christchurch War of the Bands Gladstone

This isn't a fashion show bucko! The multitude of punters that flocked to the Gladstone over the whole fortnight were there primarily for the music. A great show of enthusiasm and excitement culminating in a final featuring some of the country's finest new talent.

The bands who made the final probably deserved their place but first, the bands who didn't go through.

The Bats, featuring Paul Kean and Robert Scott had some good songs. I liked them. Evasive Action lacked a bit in clarity, leaving top-class frontman Eugene deserving better. They have a strong boot following and will hopefully improve. Blind Spies murdered 'The Light Pours Out of Me' and their originals weren't too hot either. Enough said.

YFC (not Young Farmers' Club) have given themselves scope to do well in the future. Two bassists and a powerful drummer result in an innovative and interesting sound that is well worth a listen. Apparently Nick Cave liked them - far out!

My Three Sons retain some very good ideas and it's unfortunate that these ideas aren't brought to full fruition. More cohesion needed. Discovery Class tried to define art and in doing so missed the whole point. Chris Tindall was

a very awkward frontman and their music is dated.

Now, to the final. A late licence and a full house - what more could you want?

The Venetians definitely require a few listenings. Just a bunch of ordinary blokes, they put the competition into perspective with their low-key, amateurish approach. Melodic and only just catchy, the Venetians have a nagging quality that eventually becomes infectious.

The audacity of youth! The Triffids become the competition's overnight sensation by firstly knocking out heavyweight contenders Not Really Anything, then by storming through their semis and damn near winning the final. Extremely popular, they raced through an all too short set of pop-funk songs. Join their fan club now before it's too late!

They Were Expendable, for me, have always been just that, expendable. A big wall of sound that never manages to captivate. Jay Clarkson has a distinctive voice but, along with her guitar playing, it becomes tedious. Maybe it's just me.

Some would label the White Boys predictable but look beyond the flangers and this is by far the best project that Mark Brooks has been involved with. A former Vauxhall and Newtown, Brooks has finally fallen on his feet with this combination, which recalls those earlier bands without having their weak points. Once again, this band probably won't find instant or total favour but with songs like 'Mr Nicotine' and 'Tribal Radio' they can't be too far away.

After a heated argument the White Boys deservedly pipped wonderboys the Triffids to win the

final. And, all of a sudden, Christchurch is back on the map. Alister Cain

Jive Bombers Hotshots

Gluepot, August 9.

Two nights of big houses at the Gluepot must have been both encouraging and daunting for Rick Bryant and the Jive Bombers. The people had decided this was going to be something worthwhile.

The Hotshots opened with some nice fusion and a bit of blues. Well played, but not about to set the house on fire.

The Jive Bombers are Rick Bryant's pet project - a collection of musicians, most from other bands, united by a desire to play soul music.

"Tonight you're going to hear a bracket of unadulterated soul music," said Bryant in the opening number, Eddie Floyd's 'Raise Your Hand', phrasing it almost as a challenge. It was.

Things didn't really click until the Bobby Bland classic 'I Wouldn't Treat a Dog the Way You Treated Me' and took off with the next number, Al Green's 'Take Me to the River'.

The people filled the dancefloor and, when there wasn't enough room there, spilled around the sides of the stage. Sweat 'n' smiles.

Saxophonists Chris Green and Mike Croft and trumpeter Mike Russell, who proved something of a showman, stood out on Sam and Dave's 'Wrap It Up'. Tim Robinson (drums), Paul Hewitt (percussion), Andrew Langsford (guitar) and Tom Ladvigsen (keyboards) played more low-key, but vital, roles, with Ladvigsen's playing occasionally standing out. Fiona Anderson, Joanna Clouston and Merrin Smith still need some working in on backing vocals but improved even over the two nights. And holding it all together was Alastair Dougal's loping, ducking bass.

Other highlights were LTD's 'Back in Love' and a manic encore of 'Land of 1000 Dances'.

The Jive Bombers weren't perfect, but they were pretty bloody good for a debut stand. Because of the nature of the band, it can't be guaranteed how often they'll be playing, so catch them when you can. And how could you lose with a name like that? Russell Brown



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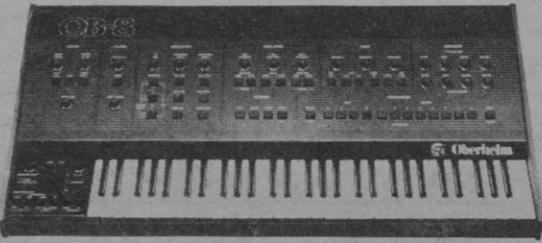
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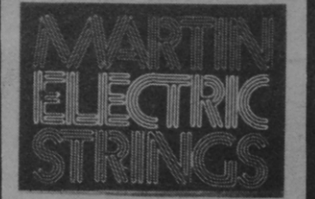
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