

Live

PANTERA. FAT MANNEQUIN
Wellington Town Hall, November 5.

Never, never, never get pissed on the ferry — there's even a notice saying it too, I think. Waking up in Wellington, at a bus terminal, after a particularly vulgar display, wondering what happened to the last seven hours is a total bummer. Worse is when you realise you've left every last cent and the address of your digs in the bag you can't find. Stumbling around the wet and windy city, the night before Pantera, looking for the city mission, is definitely a trip to be avoided. Twenty hours and one litre of Lucozade later, I stand reunited, with my chums, amidst an angry horde. The reason for the horde's anger is the doors should have been opened half an hour ago. Nervous security guards eye up a motley crew of devoted Pantera fans, who sporadically chant: "Pan-ter-a, Pan-ter-a."

Finally the doors are opened and an army of darkness, brightened up by the odd green mohawk, invades the olde worlde charm of the Town Hall. Pretty darn soon the Town Hall is packed out and, if the crowd's got anything to do with it, this gig's going to be jolly exciting.

The lights dim and Fat Mannequin, the support act for the evening, magically appear (magic 'cause I went out one door and when I came back there they were). Fat Mannequin proceed to conquer the stage but not the majority of the audience. Evidently, they've pulled out their 'eavy set for tonight and, on my first exposure, they sound like Cathedral. The music's pleasant enough, but the vocals don't seem to be coming through the mix. I'm nodding my head and tapping my foot till spotted by a large metal dude, who can't dig and proceeds to insert earplugs (very reasonably priced), informing me he's "saving his hearing for Pantera". Well, I liked them, and I'm sure it wasn't because they were the only other chaps wearing flares.

Whilst waiting for Pantera, the tension gets too much, and a nasty looking piece of aggro breaks out. Before things get any more heated, the mighty metal monster that is Pantera appears, and begins an aural assault of unprecedented ferocity. Main man Phil Anselmo looks wired, he looks totally insane, but it's OK 'cause tonight he's among friends.

All the frustration of being forced to wait in the rain is being taken out in a frenzy of moshing. Behind the ferocious foursome is a forty foot high backdrop resembling the cover of *Far Beyond Driven*. Along with the big sound is one awesome lighting display. Dozens of strobes blind and dazzle the sweaty throng, as Pantera rip through a set largely made up songs off their latest album, though both *Cowboys From Hell* and *Vulgar Display Of Power* get a look in.

Occasionally Mr Anselmo tosses the mic' into the crowd — more often than not it's half a foot down his throat, as he rages and leaps around the stage. From time to time his voice seems to lose it — later we find he's not feeling 100 percent. We also get Mr Anselmo's views on the crowds at MTV gigs — "folded arms, ass kissing fags". Luckily this is not the case at the Town Hall, with nary a folded arm in sight. Maybe it's because the audience is so

full of "bad asses", as Mr Anselmo approvingly describes us. Feeling mighty proud to be a "bad ass" and not an "ass kisser", I let the music take control.

When Pantera play loud and fast it's special, but when they slow it down, and increase, the heaviness the power involved is mind boggling, and turns otherwise rational coves into primal beings. Maybe that's what the evening really was: a mass therapy session for all us SNAGs in the audience. Pantera acted as the focal point for all this laddish bonding, giving us a beer shower, tatt' appreciation and plenty of manly doob talk.

Following a version of 'I'm Broken', that would have left lesser mortals just that, the pugnacious Pantera departed, only to return and give us a sensitive note perfect version of Black Sabbath's 'Planet Caravan'. Finishing with 'Cowboy's From Hell', the Black Barts of the metal world vacated this rainy one horse town, but not before hinting they'd return and kick our bad asses one more time. Yeeehaaawww!

KEVIN LIST

THE MUTTON BIRDS
Toronto

They may score platinum sales and songwriting awards in New Zealand, but the Mutton Birds arrived in Canada as an almost totally unknown quantity. When they flew out a fortnight later, they were still far from household names, but they'd definitely won a lot of friends here.

It was a smart move for them to latch onto an Eastern Canadian tour by the Watchmen, a popular domestic, guitar rock band. This ensured sizeable crowds, and they proved receptive to what they heard. The Mutton Birds' Toronto debut, at the Phoenix Theatre, was especially noteworthy for their clear and powerful sound, arguably the best this observer has heard there (including gigs by INXS and Midnight Oil).

The band whipped through its short opening set (40 minutes) with a minimum of banter but maximum impact, and some of the new converts they made returned four days later for their area debut as headliners. This was at the city's best small showcase club, the Ultrasound Showbar, and gave the band the chance to really display their wares via a 90 minute set. Again, impeccable sound (courtesy Paul Crowther) and subtle lighting just enhanced the strength of the group's material.

In concert, frontman Don McGlashan is the focus of most attention, but the premier musicianship of his three comrades cannot be ignored. Some of the songs from *Salty* actually sounded better live, and the cheers that greeted spirited versions of 'Dominion Road' and 'Nature' indicated a few antipodean fans in the room (the debut album has yet to be released in Canada).

In typically tasteful Kiwi fashion, McGlashan refused to plug the new album, indulge in any "howya-doin'-Toronto?" banter, or even mention the Silver Scroll he'd just received for 'Anchor Me' (to these ears, his best song yet). He did come up with a joke acronym for their label EMI (the majors are seen as unfashionable), but it's appropriate the Mutton Birds are on the same label as Crowded House here. As well as a mutual penchant for nautical metaphors, both bands purvey a refreshingly melodic, adventurous, pop-rock sound. Clearly, the Mutton Birds have the best chance of emulating Crowded House's international success. May they return to these shores soon.

KERRY DOOLE

Dance

KEVIN SANDERSON PRESENTS KMS
The Party of the Year
(UK KMS CD/double vinyl)

This guy may have invented the term "techno" although, as this collection of tracks from his highly regarded Detroit based label shows, he's now way beyond that now degraded term. Essentially this album showcases the cream of the deeper side of Detroit and Chicago, and with Chez Damier, Carl Craig, Kevin Saunderson and Mark Kinchen all contributing some of their finer moments, this album is large.

ARMAND VAN HELDEN EP
(US Strictly Rhythm 12")

This disc is so good, and so ultimately essential, that it defies reviewing. Boston's Armand is looking like the first serious contender for Todd Terry's crown as king of the serious rhythm track. Like Todd the god, he shifts effortlessly between hip-hop and house. He also has the Todd-like ability to wear his influences openly, but unashamedly mutated. This record has four monster tracks, from the tribal 'Witch Doctor' to, my favourite, the pounding 'Back ta da '80s', which pushes together classic (*Beat Street*) hip-hop loops with house attitudes. Genius.

MR FINGERS I Need You
(UK Black Market 12")

Larry Heard announces a few months back that he's giving up music, then follows the statement with a new album, the patchy ambient *Scenarios Not Songs*, and this single, in the style of much of the last Mr Fingers album. The Frankie Foncett and Simon Law mixes on side one are a waste of time. I mean, if Larry wants to appeal to the R Kelly market, he should just have a lobotomy. Side two is all together better, especially the brilliant 'Atmosphere Dub'.

DJ DISCIPLE On The Dancefloor
(UK Mother 12")

APOSTLE 1 My Soul's On Fire
(UK Azuli 12")

SPIRITS Don't Bring Me Down
(UK MCA 12")

These are totally unrelated, apart from the names. Disciple's track was taken from his US EP of a few months back, but has been remixed for global consumption (on U2's label) by Tommy D, who's given us a pretty funky, Brooklyn styled track, and by Farley and Heller, whose Roach Motel dub works best, brilliantly sampling D-Train's 'You're the One For Me' to effect.

Apostle 1 is actually the ever prolific Romanthony, following his massive 'In The Mix' hit with this tribal-gospel hybrid, in his typical grungey, discofied, hypnotic style, that threatens to be just as big as the last one. You get the

much sought after 'Testify' on the b-side as a bonus.

Spirits are a South London gospel act. The original double 12" promo had a variety of mixes from a variety of people, none of which did the song, or the voices, much justice. Check out, instead, the swaying anthemic Marshall Jefferson mix on the commercial release, which moves the track from the pleasant to the level of a classic Ten City record.

WILLIE NINJA Hot
(US Nervous double 12")

VOICES Voices in My Head
(UK Sound of Ministry 12")

Two from the Masters at Work. Willie Ninja is the doorman, or a dancer, or something like that, at a New York club, and apparently some sort of a personality around town. 'Hot' is based around the oft' used Gwen Guthrie sample, a funky groove of the type MAW could turn out in their sleep, and a sleazy talkover from Willie. The killers on this package are the amazing deep and metallic dubs from the Murk guys, which twist, build and grind in an amazing fashion.

The Voices record is really just that, a soaring anthem, remixed by CJ Mackintosh, and built around the amazing voices of Louie Vega's wife India and Michael Watford. It really is just about perfect. Just when you think it couldn't get any better, another voice drops in. Hear it and understand.

MASS Nature Rise
(US Nervous 12")

THE UNDERGROOVE Reach
(US Empire State 12")

MORAES I Like It
(US Hot 'n' Spicy 12")

HEADRUSH Underground
(US Emotive 12")

Four awesome themes from the New York and Jersey underground. As deep and as funky as you could really ask; soulful, slightly jazzy, dubbed out, drugged out tracks that you can either drift out to or groove with. The sound of the inner city.

KEY AURA Hot Dog
(UK Consolidated 12")

RHYME TIME PRODUCTIONS You and Me
(UK Cleveland City 12")

Cleveland City are about as reliable as you can get: loads of good records, a couple of great ones, and now real dogs — unless they stick vocals on it. These guys seem to stick the ugliest voices they can find on their vocal cuts. Real cheese. Unfortunately, That's a Noise is one of those. Even the dub has a vocal. Sad, Key Aura is on their tuffer offshoot and is good floor fodder with a big, big bassline. Rhyme Time is the sharpest and best of the three — funky, more of a groove and, unlike the others, the one most likely to last.

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