

>to be thugs, and begin violently dragging crowd surfers out of the pit to evict them. One especially vicious asshole hovers beside me for a moment, and I literally see him drooling as he scans the mosh pit like a predator, for teens a third of his size to beat up. It's fucking sickening. Here's a riddle for the organisers — if you're inviting kids to, 'Rock Hard', why employ a goon squad to assault them for doing so? Shihad's finale is 'La La Land', that breaks all land-speed records, and I pity the poor sods who have to follow their barrage of tricks.

Australian trio Regurgitator had drawn that short straw, but in the end it wasn't Shihad who made them appear lame, they looked after that area quite adequately by themselves. With virtually zero direction, groove or tune going on in their hip hop flavoured, angular metal, Regurgitator came over like a goofy, novelty act, present simply to fill in time.

Okay. Silverchair. What are the chances of them being more dull tonight, than they were in Auckland two nights ago? Fairly fucking good. Silverchair churn out most of the new record *Freak Show*, with the same degree of excitement that accompanies a tooth extraction. There's no menace or primal power to their tuneless, bleak grunge, that rips off Nirvana even more than last time. Silverchair's prize moment comes when singer Daniel Johns stops mid-song to berate a security bully who's roughing up a punter; "Oi! Don't think you're tough. They're just crowd surfing, they're not hurting anybody." This is followed up with a bloated rendition of Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid', and the early hits, 'Tomorrow' and 'Pure Massacre'. To end, Johns trashes his gear while in the

depths of a well choreographed, spontaneous temper tantrum, and slopes off stage. Double yawn.

As silverchair fans leave in droves, San Diego's Rocket From The Crypt hit the floorboards with the force of a bomb blast, and demand attention. It's irresistible. A large share of the departing masses suddenly make a u-turn, drawn back toward the stage by Rocket's instant burst of energy. Numbering seven, and clad in matching rhinestone shirts, RFTC rip through 'Middle', 'On a Rope', 'Ball Lightning', and 'Young Livers', as if the world was ending tomorrow. Take a slice of Elvis, add in the zealotness of a gospel preacher, and blend with the showmanship of a Vegas show compere, and you've got Rocket's main man, Speedo. An instant charmer, it's obvious the audience adore him, and it's obvious Speedo loves his rock 'n' roll. RFTC are a band as hot as hell, and couldn't squeeze a single drop more of passion into their performance if they tried. It's full up already. There are three live shows I've been privileged to experience, that were so inspirational and uplifting, I'll remember them till I die. This was the fourth.

As Rocket wind things up with 'Come See, Come Saw', the new Lancaster Park lights fizzle into action. No one I can see is awestruck by the brightness, it merely means it's time to go home. The next afternoon, Jason Young of Loves Ugly Children hoists a guitar onto the scales at Christchurch Airport, then turns and grins, and reflects on the day before. "Fuck that was good. Cricket paid for my good day yesterday — free food and alcohol all day, and great bands... and you don't get kicked off the team for smoking a joint. Fuck it was fun!"

JOHN RUSSELL

OMC

Lee's Palace
Toronto, Canada February 25

Canada has already been very good to Pauly Fuemana (OMC). Thanks to massive radio and club play of his international hit 'How Bizarre', the album of that name has reached the Top 40 and gone Gold (over 50,000 sales). OMC finally supported it here with some TV and radio appearances, and a few gigs. The fact that OMC sold out this large club is a good sign, although the low ticket price (seven dollars Canadian) may have been a factor. Another good sign was the strong turnout from OMC's record label here, Mercury/Polydor, but they and other local industry types loitered at the back bar, as is their custom. To be honest, there wasn't too much to urge them onto the crowded dance-floor. OMC put on a pleasant enough performance, but one rather low on electricity. Given that OMC to date has primarily been a studio project for Fuemana and co-writer/producer Alan Jansson, there were questions as to how that would translate into a live ensemble — comprising a scratcher, guitarist, female backing singer, and Auckland multi-instrumentalist Nathan Haines. Nathan's fluid flute playing was, in fact, the most prominent musical component of the night. It added a melodic touch to proceedings, but the laidback vibe it helped induce eventually got a bit tiresome.

As a vocalist, Fuemana doesn't have great chops or power, but the amiable cool he projects went over well with the fans up front, who offered handshakes and bottled water between songs. As a performer, he lacked dynamism, and the response generated when he and his backing singer broke into a few smooth dance steps suggests it wouldn't hurt him to move more. They ran through album tracks like 'On the Run' (the second single here), 'Angel in Disguise' and 'She Loves Italian', but, of course, all present were waiting for 'that' song. Sure enough, less than 40 minutes into the set, the opening riffs to 'How Bizarre' drew huge cheers, and a major audience sing-along.

The band exited to ringing applause, and were then lured back on for a radically different version (heavy on the flute, scratching and voices over a throbbing rhythm) of the same song. Give them good marks for inventiveness, but to do one song twice in a 45-minute set

does raise questions about a shortage of rehearsed material. These misgivings aside, it has been great to see the hybrid, but proudly Kiwi, pop sound of OMC make a splash here. Yes, it has been a slightly bizarre phenomenon, but let's hope Pauly and co. have a few more songs of that calibre to ensure the ripples linger.

KERRY DOOLE

DIRTY THREE

@Luna, Auckland, February 16.

I hardly saw Dirty Three at all, for most of this night my eyes stayed closed. I'd been waiting to really hear them again for a very long time. My rush of joy when they walked on stage was immeasurable.

Warren Ellis was grand. When he raised his violin to play, often he played with unbearable fragility, and often he played with unspeakable violence, but he always played possessed. He gave us a wry smile after every song, and he told funny stories; "This song is about going home one night with Eddie Vedder, and he looks at you and whispers in your ear that he wants to play you his songs all night, and all you can think is, 'Fuck off, you boring SNAG.'" Jim White drums the way a tornado swirls, yet he's forever composed, like he's dealing a pack of cards. Only his eyes reveal that he's actually somewhere else.

Mick Turner looked shy where he stood, as though he was still getting used to this kind of attention. When he plays his guitar, it sounds like beauty, stripped back to its core. All together, Dirty Three, they make magic. Each one of their songs unleashes a power that is untameable, and conveys emotions that can't be expressed with mere words. Song titles act as guides, 'I Really Miss You A Lot', 'I Knew It Would Come to This', 'I Remember a Time When Once You Used to Love Me', but the true meaning is in the sound. Words would be useless. Ellis talks a lot, it's just the right amount. To each song announcement, he adds an explanation that hints at the bigger picture; "This is called, 'Sue's Last Ride', or, 'It's a Bummer That You Died'."

One after another, every tune sounds amazing, and affects me the same. The instant Ellis glides his bow across the strings, and the violin begins to soar, my heart and head go along on the ride, until I arrive at a place feeling blissed and

weightless. Honest. When they play 'Everything's Fucked' and 'Hope', the sensation becomes more intense. It's difficult to describe. It feels like you cease to exist, your individual self melts in with everything — the audience, the band, the music — everything comes together in this one flowing, unified stream of energy. It's very cool.

When they're done, I feel physically drained, and intoxicated with exhilaration.

No matter what the fashion is, it is what moves your soul that is most important. Dirty Three are pure and real, and what they do hits home somewhere so deep, it's beyond being rationalised. In this world, Dirty Three are alien, for the music they create is a gift. If you accept it, be prepared to experience one of the most transcendental thrills in life. And feel honoured.

JOHN RUSSELL

PETER JEFFERIES SHAYNE CARTER SUBSTATIC

@Luna, Auckland
January 31

Substatic are from Hamilton, two guitars, bass and drones. They suffered from an early inaudible guitar mix, and later went on to emulate the sound with inaudible shoe gazing vox, sort of like a half hour of 'Transparent Radiation' by Spacemen 3. The crowd liked it. Shayne Carter had a new delay pedal that could loop the first couple of chords endlessly — that proved interesting. He used it for most of his eight songs — that proved a little tiresome. Mr Jefferies joined Mr Carter for three songs, confusing the rumour that they hate each other's guts these days. There were no versions of 'Randolph's...' or 'Hooked Lined Sunken', but a thing called 'Evolution Part Two' passed time progressively. By set's end I started a little game, whistling an illusive melody along to the Dimmer/Carter improv's. I wasn't disgusted, but I wasn't moved — maybe stronger drugs than Strongbow White were called for.

Peter Jefferies is a fucking genius! Anyone who can play drums, keyboards and vocal chords all at once is a freak, and therefore must be a genius. Combine this with fine songwriting skills and what more could you ask for? How 'bout a glorious set including a robotic version of 'World in a Blanket', pumping in Suicide fashion at four times the recorded speed. Or for true fans, a powerful

haunting version of Nocturnal Projections' 'You'll Never Know'. The cream and strawberry highlight though was 'Come Down Easy' by Spacemen 3 (the only English band worth anything in PJ's recent estimations). In all there were 10 songs on his set list from all over his solo history, with kick, snare and keyboard punctuating the emotive streams of wit and verse. Truly an indelible solo performance.

MAC HODGE

SPIDERBAIT MARY

Powerstation Auckland
February 8

One misplaced passport saw to it that Spiderbait were stranded at home in Oz when they were scheduled to play two New Zealand gigs with silverchair, a week prior to this concert. So, someone, somewhere, decided two free all-age shows — one in Auckland the other in Christchurch — would compensate nicely. In reality, what it did do (in Auckland at least), was demonstrate one point; some kids will respond favourably to anything as long as they get it for nothing.

In the downstairs, no-alcohol area of the Powerstation, Generation X (don'tcha love it! And it's back in fashion!) burst into action the second Mary struck a chord. The desperate moshing and surfing that accompanied the more sedate tunes played early in the piece begs the question, were these ragers even listening? I don't believe so. And more fool them, 'cause Mary have a couple of dandy pop tunes (still no clarification as to who the author/s is/are) to sell, that more than make up for their comprehensive lack of stage presence. My favourite is called (I think), 'Follow Me, I'm the Enemy', though it took a zesty 3Ds-ish number to really get the entire crowd fired up. Mary raised yet another cheer later in the set, when a well-aimed jumper tossed from the crowd wrapped itself around the bass player's head. Rock... and... roll.

Spiderbait, in old rock parlance, 'a power trio', should know first impressions count. So, why wander on all dry-balls like, and dress down a bunch of excited kids with a clipped lecture condemning stagediving... before you've even played a note! Who the fuck do they think they are? *Dire Straits?* Lucky for them their opening song — an extended remix of the Goodies' hit 'Run' — confused the fuck out of everybody, so no one>

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