

LIVE

HARD ONS, DEAD MOON, GESTALT, LUBE, SMAK

Powerstation, 29 August
So OK, SMAK were just SMAK, and if you don't know what that's like yet, you probably don't get out much (I'm not necessarily saying that's a bad idea)... anyhow I only caught their last four songs and the mix was fuck-awful too but what the hex, you can see these guys most any day of the week anyway and good on 'em. Next band is called Lube and they gotta be the worst fuckin bunch of shit I sat still for since, I dunno, the Abel Tasmans. Wanna "objective" description, OK, it's sorta kinda "hardcore" (ie it's fast, they jump around a bunch), kinda sorta "funky" (ie hi treble gain on the bass and they jump around a lot too), maybe vaguely "metal" (dopey almost Judas-Priest voc approach and did I mention they jump around, forget it). Yabba dabba doo.

Then Gestalt who I've seen a couple of times before and at least one of these occasions thought they were pretty damn great, but right here and right now, tho' they select their targets astutely (S. Youth freeway-somnambulism vs. neo-crypto-proto-prog of Vanilla Fudge ilk vs. gas-pumpin' mechanoid-metal whatever) they miss em just about every one. Tho' as you'd expect of anyone connected w/ the Z-Man's scum-scramming biz empire they whip out a few dumb gimmicks (dude from Nothing At All dancing stick-insect-like stageride, two gurl singers demonstrating amplified gargling) but nuthin that'd really wake you up. Too bad.

Dead Moon have to set up their small circle of equipment right up the front of the gaping-chasmic Pow-Stat stage just like any little two-bit support band w/ the main band's stuff already banked up behind 'em and so there's the three of 'em and their amp stacks all huddled together round Andrew Loomis's drum kit (just kick/ snare/ floortom/ hi-hat/ two cymbals but it ain't how big it is it's what you do with it, as he proceeds to demonstrate) and straightaway they erupt into 'You Must Be A Witch'... pretty fucking incredibly great how something this raw and alive coulda slipped thru the net in this day and age, the Lollipop Shoppe mouldy-oldie snortin' more rip than ever 'neatly the merciless precision of their steely focus (sorry, I was just thinkin bout that line in that Eagles song)... imagine Link Wray's 'Rumble' played by early AC/ DC thru the Sonic's equipment w/ Roky Erickson singing over a bad phone line from Uranus and then try and imagine 20 or 30 other things equally as great in rapid succession and maybe you'll have some kinda analogue for the things I witnessed that night. Song bleeding into song piled upon song

of Fred Cole's call-it-genius-cos-I haven't-got-my-thesaurus-with-me plus choice nuggets of cover-scramming in El Prez's 'Can't Help Falling In Love' most beautifully rendered by Toody, 'Parchman (Parchment) Farm' (Mose Allison via Blue Cheer) and climaxing with a 'Communication Breakdown' (Zep, not Roy) that went punk rock/intense space jam encompassing all four sides of Hawkwind's *Space Ritual* in one min flat/ more punk rock/ that's it. One encore and that's it, PERIOD. Wow.

I'd seen the Hard Ons last time they came here and been pretty impressed but after the Dead Moon, they might's well've been Genesis. Gotta hand it to 'em that they expended a lot of energy but so what cos it was energy that woulda been more interestingly expended chopping wood. And having figured that I shoulda just got the fuck outta there but I didn't, I just sat in the back bar writin in my diary like a fuckin nerd and hopin there'd be some kinda action afterwards, yeah, sure. Viva Las Vegas I guess.

DUANE ZARAKOV

HAMMERAK, DEMEMTIA, CONVULSION, PRESTIDIGITATOR, HUMAN, DEMISE

The Arena, Chch, September 9
Fortuitously postponed from Saturday afternoon to the next Wednesday evening, this gig proved to be quite a crowd puller. Whether it was the lure of the TV3 camera crew or perhaps Hammerak's die hard fans who filled out the numbers, it's nice to think that Christchurch's Death metallers are finally getting some of the attention they deserve.

The evening kicked off to a fine start with Hammerak playing a short set of their heavier covers. They may not be the freshest or most original metal band in Christchurch but they are easily the most professional. Next up were two young thrash bands. Dementia, then Convulsion. Neither of these bands were particularly memorable. Needless to say they played a fair amount of Metallica and Slayer and both seemed quite tight.

The show really started when Prestidigitator blasted forth. This was their debut appearance and although their set was very short their music was fast and brutal making them a welcome addition to the local scene.

Leaving the audience little time to recover after a quick change-over, Human ripped through a powerful set filled with crunchy riffs and a healthy dose of humour. The highlight was their anthem to all things bizarre in Deathmetal, a song called 'Decomposing Rectum Muscle'.

By this stage of the evening I was worn out but Demise managed to drive the demented crowd in the Pit into a feverish frenzy. Like few other



David Mitchell, 3Ds

Photograph: Phillip Moore

3Ds, KING LOSER, BI-PLANE

Powerstation, 21 August
The irony of all the godawful sitcoms on TV is that as soon as you've seen two minutes, you have to watch it until the end, even though you know what's going to happen, just in case it doesn't. The drug of the nation indeed. In any case that's the weak excuse I have for missing half of Bi-plane's set. Bi-plane looked forlorn and frightened, marooned on an island of light in the centre of the large Powerstation stage. The sound fitted the image — moody, lonesome melodies about murders in car parks, Sue Bridge's lush-inspired guitar melding a floating pensive quality with Murray Cooling's acoustic melodies.

I found their uncomplicated, pure sound quite appealing. Unfortunately this was not a feeling shared by the rest of the "great unwashed" lurking in the Powerstation shadows, most of whom cheered as Bi-plane announced their last song. Sure there were a few problems: Sue's vocals were mixed down to non existence, leaving Murray somewhat stranded and off-key, sounding like Nick Cave at 15rpm. But hell, give them a bit of time.

King Loser defy categorisation. They incorporate bluesey twangs with Soundgardenish walls, all based on more powerchords than Electricorp knew existed. They open with a hellishly bulldozing instrumental before kicking into 'Get On Your bike And Ride', with similarly axial guitar, and surprisingly easy to grasp lyrics (ie the title a hundred times). Now I'm not one to devalue the theories of minimalism, but after hearing "get on your bike and ride" repeated that much I did begin to wonder what else King Loser expected us to do on a bike. Make toast? In any case, it's the resplendently orange Celia that stands out, without doubt Auckland's answer to the Pixies' Kim Deal. There's something surprisingly reassuring about a woman gripping a large black bass whilst wailing in ecstatic agony to a large crowd of people.

The 3Ds enter, lights reflecting off saliva the Yanks pasted all over their posteriors. Despite what flatulent American rock critics say, the 3Ds are nothing like the Pixies. If superficial comparisons must be drawn (OK, why not) then David Saunders is the antithetical Mr Hyde to Mick Hucknell's Dr Jekyll (perhaps it's the hair). Shaggily self-absorbed, his fingers blur between frets as he warbles out the riff for 'Outer Space'.

The 3Ds' melodies work on a kind of nursery rhyme deviance, jammed together and rescued from the precipice of thrashing chaos by maniacally poppy vocals. To the 3Ds, "walls of sound" are just a cliché the music press fawned over last year. They construct cavernous sonic bombshelters, cram a zillion seemingly mischorded riffs into them, shake the whole thing about a bit, and then wait until something explodes. The thrash level is turned up to maximum: this is more chaotic, more hedonistic, and more brilliant than *Hellzapoppin* ever let on. Pity they didn't play for very long.

TONY MILLER

death metal bands, Demise manage to write catchy tunes without sacrificing any of the grinding heaviness. It's a farce when a band of this calibre get rejected in favour of the entirely inappropriate Dead Flowers for supporting Sepultura at their recent Auckland gig.

Overall it was a pretty successful gig although it's a shame TV3 packed up before Demise hit the stage. I personally think the earlier Thrash bands were unnecessary as the main reason behind the event was to showcase the local Death scene. But at six bands for \$4 there's no disput-

ing value for money and I saw many happy, if exhausted faces at the end of the evening.

EDWARD DEWE

THE CURE

At Smart Supertop, August 15
Now so unhip it stinks, the Cure return to these shores after a ten year absence having released a string of wonderful singles in the meantime. It's these singles which make an evening with the Cure pretty much unbeatable value for money. For two and a half hours they churn through their extensive back catalogue and the new album *Wish* with scant regard for the less than comfortable surroundings of the Supertop. In fact it kind of suited them, giving the band the appearance of a freakshow at the circus.

Beginning with 'Pictures of You' the first hour was great with many people ecstatic just to see their heroes on stage. Then came that part of a Cure show where they play your least favourite songs ('Never Enough', 'Hanging Garden', 'The Walk' etc) backwards. However the last part of the show is faultless as hit after hit is trotted out, all ending in two encores which included 'Boys Don't Cry' and a 15 minute version of 'A Forest'.

Even Robert Smith, dressed in customary oversized V-neck jumper, seemed to enjoy himself. In fact, it would be an extremely miserable bastard that didn't enjoy this great show.

AUSTER CAIN

RANDY CRAWFORD

Pan Pacific Hotel, September 6
At about the same time as Randy Crawford was enrapturing an overflow crowd at the Pan, other discerning citizens throughout the land were watching the final episode of an excellent series called *Nice Work*. In an earlier episode the woman lead had sneered at her male antagonist's choice of music: "Randy Crawford! Don't you find her a little bland?"

On record the accusation is frequently valid but in Sunday's performance Crawford's soulfulness was never in question. Her voice is certainly silky but there's an edge to it too. Whether soaring, crooning or whispering it was passionate yet always under control. Behind her cooked a ten-piece band drawn from the nation's finest. As a unit they were exemplary with Martyn Winch (guitar) and Steve Sherriff (saxes) providing particularly fine solos.

Of course Crawford sang some mush — she loves it and so do most of her audience. Yet even that seemed gutsier than on the albums (although some of her self-penned songs from the new album really are dreary). Smooth-flowing oldies such as 'Rio De Janeiro Blue' sparkled like new. Uptempo numbers — 'Every Kinda People', 'You Might Need Somebody' et al — delivered a punch that had the audience feeling trapped by the venue's seating arrangements. At least some dancing

broke out for 'Streetlife' although that was at the evening's close. Crawford's encore of 'Imagine' proved her ability to retrieve a song from clichedom and make it her own.

Meanwhile back in TV land, just before the closing credits of *Nice Work* were about to roll, the male took out his favourite Randy Crawford album, smiled and slipped it into the car tapedeck. I hope he gets to see her in concert sometime.

PETER THOMSON

DIRTBOX, SHAFT

Boardwalk Bar, September 3
Two main things going on for Shaft, (1) a song writer (Robt. Cardy) for whom many of the more widely idolised practitioners of the craft know to step the fuck aside for and (2) the baddest operative rock grist (John Segovia) in the southern hemisphere 'cept maybe if you count Bill Vosburgh which you won't cos the way things're going you'll never hear him, too bad, or guys like Heazlewood or Geo. Henderson who are arguably only tangentially "rock" or, I dunno, a few other people I just thought of too but this sentence is already way too long so, later for them. So OK, that's the treble register pretty much taken care of and then down below that you got solid rock 'sfar as the bass gitr goes (Danny Maneto) and drumming (Stu Page) that you could call "functional", "Axemen-style", unsophisticated boom boom type o' deal. Pretty mellow set tonight for the most part but kicks in real good towards the end w/ Clout's 'Substitute' dribbling into Bob's 'How Long?' — rolling-thunder-down-the-autobahn from bass and drums kind of pitched 'twixt 'I Feel Love' which gets quoted in the lyrics and Faust's 'Krautrock' which doesn't (it's a instrumental anyway) and then all over this you got Segovia's ramjet howl that constantly threatens to become Hendrix's '3rd Stone' but never does (he does 'Lady Godiva's Operation' in there tho'), all tossed off laconic and effortless as blowing smoke. Pretty great, and encoring w/ a greasy-stoopid versh of Huey P. Smith's 'Doncha Just Know It' doesn't hurt none either.

Wish I had as much to say 'bout Dirtbox but no way cos I cut out pretty early into their set (cos it meant I could get a lift home for one thing) but OK, they're pretty much what that handy consumer's guide *Where's The Snake* refers to as yr regular A.R.T. (Alternative Rock Trio) and looked like maybe they could have some moments of OKness (specifically when the singer-grist is a couple of feet away from the mic w/ his mouth shut tight) but the bottom line is sorta like, "heavier early Cure" or thereabouts and personally I've got a heckuva lot of stuff requiring more urgent attention but I'm sure plenty of you've got some use for something like that, hey, she's all yours.

D. ZARAKOV

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