

Live

Tall Dwarfs, Birdsnest Roys Windsor, April 6.

I'll try and be brief, for once. I talked to Ross, the singer from Birdsnest Roys, afterwards: "Since last week all we've had is people telling us how good we are," he shrugged, pleased but a little bemused. And, indeed, the Roys once again won over an entire (packed) pubful and people said aren't this band good and danced and smiled and that sort of thing. The only trick for these six now is to avoid letting all this praise go to their heads. I think they'll get by. "I don't know about you but we're determined to have a good time," Chris Knox told the crowd.

And he had evil circles painted around his eyes and wore an old chopped-up, paint-splattered suit coat that still bore stains from sweat extracted during legendary performances from Toy Love or maybe even the Enemy. And the Tall Dwarfs sounded more like Toy Love or maybe even the Enemy than they ever have before. It was special because it was the last Tall Dwarfs performance for the foreseeable future, as Alec Bathgate is going to England. It was also special because the performers and the audience made it so. Before such an audience the Tall Dwarfs could virtually have done no wrong but rather than settle for a trot-through of Greatest Hits they twisted and tortured familiar songs until, at times, they were almost unrecognisable. I don't know how many people were

listening to the words but Knox was in fearsome ad-lib form. No small factor in the chemistry was the head-down longhair drumming of Mike Dooley. He too seemed to be playing for all he was worth. Among the highlights were a penetrating 'She's A Woman' and the newie 'Get Outta the Garage'. I don't know if the performance's pacing was as measured as it seemed but the whole thing hit a peak with the 10 minute-plus closer, a version of 'Crush' with the aid on percussion and guitar of three of This Kind Of Punishment. The song soon left the original riff behind and careered through a path that seemed to sum up most of the things Tall Dwarfs have done. It was kind of a shame that most of the audience couldn't see the onstage fervour through the gauze curtain that fell for the last

song — I got the impression they'd all have been smiling if they hadn't had their teeth clenched trying to keep up. On the other hand, the opaque screen went hand in hand with the blitz of white noise that came outta the PA. The murals were neat too: So, when it was all over and Chris handed the big drum down to the dancers in front, it had been a fine farewell for a really remarkable guitarist — and he certainly played for all he was worth. If it had've been seven or eight years ago maybe something would've been smashed, but as it was there was no need. Things really are looking up. **Russell Brown**

Circus Block 4, EVT Fear Of Extinction Majestic Theatre, March 30.

The old Majestic Theatre, stripped of its pews, but with the high vaulted ceiling and art nouveau decoration intact, is an impressive venue. Unfortunately, few were attracted there by the 'Ten Foot Fear of the Circus Parade'. The allure of Bill Direen and the Chills elsewhere in the city proved too much for most punters. EVT (Experiments in Vertical Takeoff) opened. A rather muddy sound and songs that perhaps

contained too many ideas robbed this five-piece of major impact. Fear of Extinction followed with their brand of 80s pop. On occasion a song would be transported by a powerful, surging bass line. One instrumental in particular put me in mind of the mood evoked by the Joy Division singles. Often, however, songs would begin well then crash along to a guitar motif. Nothing that further experience won't remedy. Circus Block 4's performance was assured, crowned by effective lighting and their flame-belching clown accomplice. The recorded works have greater impact on stage with rhythms and percussion playing off each other. The finest moment was an instrumental ('Brine?') with a theme which looped teasingly around shards of guitar and busy percussion. I was driven away before Ten Foot Faces by the poorly mixed sound and a certain amount of fatigue. In concept the show had been immaculate. In fact it presented four bands with an opportunity to play to a small but varied and fairly appreciative audience. **David Taylor**

Right Left and Centre, Able Tasman, Eric Glandy Band, Diatribe, Birdsnest Roys, Goblin Mix, Otis Mace and the New Society Band Mainly at the Windsor Castle, March 29, 30.

It was a heartwarming sight, the Aotea Square stage. After a stop-start march up Queen St, street theatre, the obligatory speeches and a very moving poem, it was time for a semblance of Right Left and Centre to shamble onstage and add another voice to the evening's anti-tour protest. The tiny structure must have groaned beneath the weight of the musicians, the pickup backing chorus, the officials and speechmakers and everyone's children. 'Don't Go' was pretty neat, as much as a result of the shambles and lack of a "proper" band as anything else. Full marks to C. Knox for having the good sense to clown around a bit. No marks at all to the organiser who sternly told the crowd that: "This isn't a celebration. It's a protest," after the applause for the first musical turn. After everyone had taken the trouble to simply be **CONTINUED ON PAGE 32**

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