

LIVE

Headless Chickens, Skeptics

Gluepot, Oct 3

This was a night of such intensity and passion that you could be forgiven for wondering what alien ingredient besides standard AngloSaxon blood (aided no doubt by varying quantities of alcohol) was coursing through all the talented veins performing.

An effigy of the laidback kiwi was torn to shreds by the Headless Chickens, the broken pieces passed on to the Skeptics and incinerated by their burning, tempestuous wall of sound. Who cares about tunes and rhythms when musical souls are bared with such emotion and ferocity, not an everyday occurrence in the land of she'll-be-righters.

It was a very sober-looking Chris Matthews who took to the stage (Saturday night this is), and by the second song, 'Do the Headless Chicken,' the crowd was already moving closer to watch Rupert Taylor shadow-play Indonesian style, and receive the fermenting torrent of energy.

But it was energy not in its raw state but programmed and synthesised and stylised and staged so that no matter how impassioned was Chris's voice or how frenetic Grant Fell's bass playing, there was still a feeling of spontaneity and vitality that was lacking.

Whereas the Skeptics were so full on that had they been charged with another watt of cacophonous energy

they probably would have self-immolated on stage.

Drummer Don White pulverised his kit, John Holvorsen scratched abrasive distortions from his guitar and Nick Roan added to the discordant melee on bass, keyboards and backup vocals, a combination which left not a few skulls in the audience numb.

But the happy in the most bizarre head space of the evening was undoubtedly lead singer David D'Ath, who flung himself round like a man-nequine tortured by malevolent spirits. His fanatic and febrile chants and cadences merged genius with lunacy, and passion with terror to forge a hypnotic spell over those who could handle such an unholy racket. Just as well he's the lead singer of an exceptional band and not a politician. Or is it ...?

Susan Camden

Beaver and Friends

Gluepot, October 17

The occasion was a farewell to Beaver, who was off to London for a two-week stint at Ronnie Scott's famed jazz club. The first set was devoted to the sort of material she's been developing in recent years: beautiful old songs that are beloved of jazz-oriented musicians for their melodic and harmonic treasures.

It takes a mature, intelligent singer to breath freshness into the standards like 'I Can't Get Started' and 'Solitude,' and Beaver showed herself fully equal to the task. Mind you, she was supported by a band that included Brian Smith, Peter Wood, Billy Kristian and South Island guitar legend, Mark Kahi. Kahi, making a rare appearance in these climes, also took a couple of solo spots.

As lovely as the music was, it by no

means found favour with all the usual Gluepot crowd, one of whom was heard to mutter, "This stuff should be at the Regent, not here."

The complainant soon ceased his moaning once Beaver took the stage for her second set. With a change of guitarist and guests Hammond Gamble and, later on, Sonny Day, the course became a solid helping of rockaroll and R&B. Yes, Beaver and Hammond duetted on 'Should I Be Good,' and yes, Sonny did a 10 minute rendition of 'Savin' Up.' (He even asked us "Are ya feelin' alright?")

The crowd loved it all and packed the dancefloor that had stayed vacant throughout the first set. A finale of 'Dust My Broom' brought onstage together all nine musicians who'd featured throughout the evening. If the second set was what the Gluepot had wanted all along, it's more likely music from the first that Beaver will be honing up with the musicians she'll be encountering in London.

Peter Thomson

Flesh D-Vice

Gluepot, October 31

About the most exciting part of Flesh D-Vice's Halloween night was the mad axeman outside who managed to hack at a couple of unsuspecting punters' limbs.

Inside, the long-established Wellington hard rock band was offering little in the way of tricks or treats. They delivered a steady stream of tight speed thrash originals and covers that were well executed but made for a predictable and boring performance.

Gerald I've-been-in-the-eye-of-a-hurricane Dwyer belted out the lyrics in his usual rock star fashion accompanied by Eugene Pope, long-

standing guitar screecher of note. But Eugene didn't really look like he was enjoying himself much tonight. Maybe he was thinking about his imminent new role as a father or maybe he was just missing Dwayne, their old bass player now in England. I missed Dwayne. Not that there was anything wrong with Andy Steroid's bass playing, he was great. He just didn't leap about like Dwayne used to (and he's not so cute).

Sitting on the drummer's stool instead of Brent Jenkins was 20-year-old J P of Dutch blood. Brent's in the father way too so he couldn't make it. It must be hard to be a member of a hard living rock group with sprogs on the brain. Doesn't really go with the image. Neither did the audience fit the bill really. A motley bunch of jaded punks and hippies who'd let their mohicans grow out. It's tough trying to age gracefully.

Sue Camden

Wild Poppies

Rock Theatre, Wellington

The Wild Poppies are a Wellington band that have decided to up anchor and head for greener shores. England has opened her arms and at least three-quarters of the band are on their way. Their last concert was held at the Rock Theatre to a largely admiring crowd who managed to negotiate their way down the dark alley way. An intimidating journey for those who are paranoid, hate the dark, or are just plain nervous.

It has been great to see this venue back in use. Nothing will quite emulate those seedy heydays when the Swingers or Toy Love were igniting the night, but nevertheless, full marks to Steve Cochrane and Skank for doing thier bit and doing something for the music scene.

The Poppies re-released their *Heroine* album with a new mix. Most songs of the night come from that excellent debut album. A few minor sound problems beset the night with the guitarist, Robert Axford, losing sound but soon he's up and pumping. This band likes to create a laidback sound where the electric guitar acts as a semi slide to caress your moods. heighten expectations or lower anxieties — early 70s psychedelic!

The high points of the night are a version of their beautiful song off the Skank compilation record *When the Wind Blows*, 'Walkabout,' with its entrancing melody line. Their new single is well worth checking out too, 'Where is Wellington' — great stuff, and does anyone really want to know the answer?

But it is a sad goodbye to yet another New Zealand band off to plod in the wild blue yonder, though I hear the drummer has stayed behind. Farewell lads and best of luck. I hope the British enjoy the taste!

Tim Byrne

The Drone Ensemble

Auckland, October 28

Industrial lullabies from the Dr Seuss school of music. Oil drum barbecues turned upside down and wired up as kotos, giant megaphones welded to arcs and poles, a dustbin lid and the old school bell feature in the Drone installation. Six operators in white overalls manipulate the sculptures/instrumentns with druidic solemnity.

Ingenuity provided as much entertainment for a warmly indulgent audience as the gentle, percussive Drone music. Drone opened their programme with the dissonant sounds of the three kotos played in different timing and developed a light, challenging composition against a backing tape with what sounded like elephant squeals.

The more conventional songs lacked substantial structure: tenuous vocals, undercut by tedious two chord bass, enhanced by Rosemary Whitehead's sympathetic keyboards and one charming violin piece.

Darryl Hocking and Daniel Newnam's whimsical, untuned metal sculptures, beaten, plucked and bowed, were the mainstay of visual interest and sonic surprises. Megaphones swung on horizontal poles relayed sounds to each other in 'Gate Piece.' Huge metal flanges became bells.

The final composition 'Full Glass' brought classical touches, an unresolved circular sequence and cicada orchestra percussion to a dynamic crescendo.

The Drone Ensemble are at their best when they are taking risks. I'd like to see them extend their range of risks — create more mediums for exploring sounds, develop bolder compositions, and inject a little humour.

Jewel Sanyo

Ladies at Le Bom

Auckland, October 24

A welcome diversion from tongue in cheek crooner Mark Phillips, last seen exhorting Jimmy Nail to warble 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' — two ladies — Jennifer Ward Leland and Maria Monet sang standards from Gershwin, Billie Holiday et al.

Jennifer Ward Leland gives a glamorous performance as a cabaret per-

former and trilled a delightful 'Ain't Misbehavin'. Maria Monet is an accomplished scat singer whose effortless, honeyed delivery and perfect timing inspired the Le Bom ensemble to a genuine late night jazz modd. Should happen more often.

Jewel Sanyo

VIDEO

Jimi Hendrix Experience

Live at Winterland

(Polydor)

Another fine dip in the Hendrix archives, which unlike the vinyl necrophilia that went on after his death, really merits release. Live and wild from San Francisco's Winterland theatre in 1968, all in clear digital sound. Most interesting is 'Red House,' 10'58" of wonderful blues, left off *Are You Experienced* for being too "black" sounding. Hot also is 'Sunshine of Your Love,' the Cream thing, done in a blazing instrumental version, and the first time on vinyl. Unlike the rush of Monterey, Hendrix is more relaxed and jazzier here. Compare the versions of 'Wild Thing' and 'Fire' with earlier takes, and there is quite a difference. The poster that comes with the album is just great for bringing on acid flashbacks.

KB

Abbott & Costello

Go to Hollywood (CEL)

The deadly duo famous for their "Who's on third?" routine, and numerous movies with Frankenstein and other Universal monsters. This is one of their best, playing two bumbling barbers to the stars. They attempt to become big time agents and muck it up. Costello is the best, the fat man with the Brooklyn accent who ends up defeating the rich and famous. Perfect dreams for the depression, and good enough for the next one.

KB

Night at the Opera

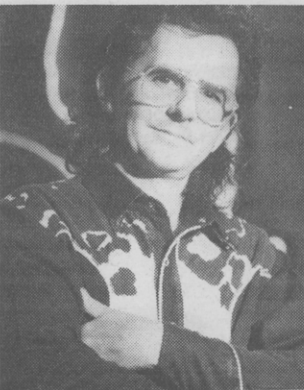
Day at the Races

The Big Store (CEL)

Three of the Marx brothers' greatest works. So what if they're basically the same, you know, Groucho with the one liners, Harpo with those harp bits (every film), Chico on the piano, etc. There's always this bland blonde guy who gets the girl and sings real dumb songs. But in between are some fabulous set pieces, like the chase scene in *The Big Store*, which looks wilder than Roadrunner cartoons. The real star is Groucho (of course), cigar blazing and a real nasty line in wit. Three headcases who appeal to the crazy streak in all of us.

KB

SHAKE SUMMATION



Al Hunter

Al Hunter

'Jealous Guy' (CBS7")

If anyone deserves airplay, it's Al Hunter, and if any song is gonna get it for him, it's this fabulous remake of John Lennon's 'Jealous Guy.' Instantly appealing, with the perfect amount of country feel, it swings along to the delicate, tuneful licks of Ken Francis, Stuart Pearce's piano and organ, and Al's heartfelt vocal, which brings out the pain and passion with spirited phrasing. One of the year's gems, it gives cover versions a good name. Hopefully the melodic, soulful flip, Al's 'Evening Sun,' will get people listening to the rest of the sublime *Neon Cowboy* LP.

The Rockits

'Keep on Running' (Reaction 7")

The Spencer Davis Group classic never loses its energy, and this is a creditable 80s rendition by some anonymous Auckland "name" musos, produced by Dave McArtney. Great R&B vocal, but it could do with even more spicing up to add to the original. The B-side 'Across the Floor' mix

hints at the possibilities. Still, if it means some locals get added to a station's "oldies" rotate ...

Midge Marsden and the Roger Fox Band

'Tuxedo Junction' (Circular 7")

From the 1985 LP *Let the Good Times Roll*, 'Tuxedo Junction' has a live sound but is hampered by its low-rent production. Midge's vocal has spirit and there are moments of finger-snapping subtlety, but the band lacks energy. 'Flip, Flop and Fry,' the Joe Turner standard, has more punch in a Vegas kind of way, but there's an awful heavy rock solo in the middle. Radio stations with older target audiences are crying out for NZ material to fit their formats, but no doubt the RNZ programmers would reject this, from their own studios, for low production standards and "the original was better." Sad but true.

Chrome Safari

'Anything For You' (Pagan 12")

Built on a catchy, insistant synth riff, 'Anything' has a cold urban technofunk feel that drives along, with the bite and cynicism of Simon Alexander's voice leavened by Shanley Morris's sweetness. Just when the riff starts to nag, it's all over. 'The Meaning of Life' doesn't try so hard so is more appealing, almost a duet between Simon and Shanley, with lots of melodic, drifting touches and a cruiser pace that might be dancefloor friendly. B-side 'For You ... Anything' brings the bass forward and adds quirky touches, but you can sense a frowning brow behind it all.

Darlene Adair

'Deception' (CBS 7")

A light pop song sung well in a Rickie Lee Jones (remember her?) mode that should suit the Haurakis, Radio 1, RNZ Cornet. Not dynamic but inoffensive. 'No Prisoners' hints at more but is valium mellow, drifting by, elegant but empty. But it holds up best because it's not trying to do too much with too little.

Chris Bourke

books

After Tokyo

by David Eggleton

(Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop, through Brick Row; \$20)

It was estimated in 1969 that 60 per-

cent of school leavers would never pick up a book again.

David Eggleton's characters move in a world where the book is a forgotten object. This is an impressive collection of short stories about the detritus of the consumer society, the flash of hi-tech.

Stories in which the style moves between the simple storytelling of 'Connection' to the reportage from an oversized Auckland of 'Squid's Cookbook,' from ennui to exotic, erotic exposition.

The range is wide. 'From an Existential Novel' is Norman Mailer in brief(s). 'Gaylene Goes to the Sauna' reaches the flat expressionism of Dirty Realism. 'The World at the Weekend' is so dirty it shows why he doesn't live in Wellington, where it is set. This book fills a gap.

Michael Howley

Country Music, USA

by Bill C Malone

(Equation, \$39.95)

When Bill Malone's history of country music was first published in 1968, it was the most comprehensive history of the music that had appeared. Now a 550-page new edition is out, with updating to include the new movements in country through the 70s to 1984, plus its account of the role of women in country has been expanded. There's also a sensational 100 pages of bibliographical essays that lists hundreds of books and articles. Extremely serious and academic, (with a rather sniffy attitude to rock) it provides a dry, accurate overview at the absolute opposite end of the spectrum from Nick Tosches' outrageous *Country*. Of limited use to the consumer though: hopefully some distributor might bring in John Morthland's *Best of Country Music* (Double-day, Dolphin).

CB

Top 100 Albums

by Paul Gambaccini

(GRR/Pavilion, \$32)

The definition of a non-book: Gambaccini canvasses a smug, aging panel of overwhelmingly male and white critics, and comes up with virtually the same Top 100 list as he did 10 years ago, but adds a few colour photos. For train-spotters, *Born in the USA* is the only album of the last decade to make the Top 10, and the biggest rise in that time was Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* from 106 to 4; Clapton's *Layla* suffered the biggest fall, from 15 to 92. Of some interest, however, is Greil Marcus, whose Top 10 alltime records *only* come from the last 10 years, with X-Ray Spex' *Germfree Adolescents* top.

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