

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

the crowd, and produced some engrossing music. Equipped with a battery of echo effects, he gave out a stunning array of sounds from his acoustic and electric guitars, varying his moody jazz-folk with a sleazy, greasy version of the old standard "Jelly Roll". He drew warm applause as the crowd settled in for the first evening.

Citizen Band came on amidst rumours of a big split, but gave no sign of any tension in a high-performance set of favourites. They looked and sounded happy, and were sadly forbidden an encore due to the pressure of time. They gave the audience what it wanted, and even if the atmosphere was a little sad, they finished on a high note.

Split Enz have never been known for standing still, and came on determined to show fans that they were still progressing. In such a setting, this may not have been such a wise idea. Frustrated cries for old favourites were ignored or brushed aside with an "all in good time." Nobody had heard the new album, and to play so much unfamiliar material was a brave, but slightly foolish move. On one hearing, it seems things are still healthy in the songwriting department. However, the set only came alive during the final numbers, which went back into familiar territory.

Returning after several months of touring in Australia, Hello Sailor failed to live up to the expectations of many. Their performance may have suggested to some that they're a spent force, but new songs they previewed and the promise of Paul Hewson's fuller participation in the band (he played on several numbers) suggested otherwise. May be Hello Sailor still need a small cluttered stage, and preferably a crowded Gluepot, to fire on all cylinders.

There was nothing half-hearted about Flight X-7 who presented a brisk set of their material with all stops out. However, whether they have originals strong enough to sustain a recording career remains to be seen.

MIDGE TO TOY LOVE

A hazy end to Saturday night was followed by a sizzling Sunday morning, kicked off with some incomprehensible noises from solo performer Richard Lello. What he was doing on the main stage, heaven knows. Half an hour of his tuneless rambling was more than enough for most. Midge Marsden's Kiwi Connection sped the proceedings up with some old-fashioned electric boogie, which no festival seems complete without. Undemanding fun and just the thing to set the mood.

Sheerlux were brave playing so soon after the loss of Paul Robinson, but coped well under

the circumstances. They even put up some new material which suggests they're far from a spent force, and the crowd seemed to wish them well.

The Crocodiles were delightful. A fun band which refuses to take itself seriously, they won many hearts with their lightweight, silly pop music. Their songs are catchy, and with the added attraction of the lovely Jenny Morris, maybe they'll succeed. A welcome touch of humour, and a well deserved encore. Watch for their album.

Toy Love were beset with their usual gear problems, but still turned in a vigorous performance, though a short one. When one number failed to get off the ground, Knox called it a day, but still left the stage with the thumbs up from the audience.

STREET TALK, TH'DUDES, ELVIS & ATTRACTIONS, MI-SEX & RENEE GEYER

Street Talk took no risks, and ran through a very standardised set which left little impression after it had finished. They can ill afford to rest on their laurels, and perhaps need to get a little dirt into their music again.

Th' Dudes, on the other hand, got angry, and were better for it. They were pelted with eggs at the start of their performance, and after exchanging insults with the audience, went on to

give a tough, invigorating show, with Dave Dobbyn being outstanding. Their song about the delights of alcohol was perfect for the location, and they gave some more experienced performers a lesson in showmanship.

Anticipation was running high as Elvis Costello and The Attractions took the stage, and those down front almost suffocated in the crush. Costello's charisma carried him through, but the performance seemed rather perfunctory. Maybe he needed to get angry too. It goes with his music. Whatever the reason, it was just another good, entertaining show, and from Elvis Costello I expected more. He seems unable to project to such a huge audience, and would probably have done far better in a smaller venue. For the juiced-up festival crowd, though, it was good to have him there, and he received the expected reception when he promised, like many others before him, to return.

For me, the festival belonged to Mi-Sex. Talking to them beforehand, it was obvious they were happy and confident, and determined to show their countrymen just how good they were. They flattened the crowd with a set that was nothing short of devastating. Steve Gilpin seemed tireless in his acrobatics and Kevin Stanton was masterful. Their performance was a tribute to their unity and determination, and their new numbers back up their claims that the next album will be even better than the first.

Renee Geyer struggled bravely with an indifferent audience that had had its fill for the day. It wasn't her fault, having to go on so late, but she too seemed uncomfortable in the setting. She was just unlucky, and seemed glad to finish.

DON'T LIKE MONDAYS

The exodus started early on Monday, and the crowd was very thin out front. The Wide Mouthed Frogs soon got the blood moving, with a collection of cover versions of old top 40 hits, ranging from "The Bluebeat" to "Lady Madonna". Another un-serious act, and the punters said thank you. By the time Aellian Blade came on, sounding depressed and out of tune, I'd had my fill, as had many others. Moving the big drawcards out of Monday's programme was a smart move.

So that was Sweetwaters. If it was a financial success there seems no reason why it can't be run every year, when the people keep returning in droves. Such events are a release from the humdrum daily existence, and everyone needs them.

I met a lot of old friends and made some new ones in an atmosphere conducive to friendship. As trite as it sounds, that's what Sweetwaters was all about. Living in a communal atmosphere that breaks down unnecessary barriers.

For that alone, it was worthwhile. A shared experience, and the stuff memories are made of.

Duncan Campbell

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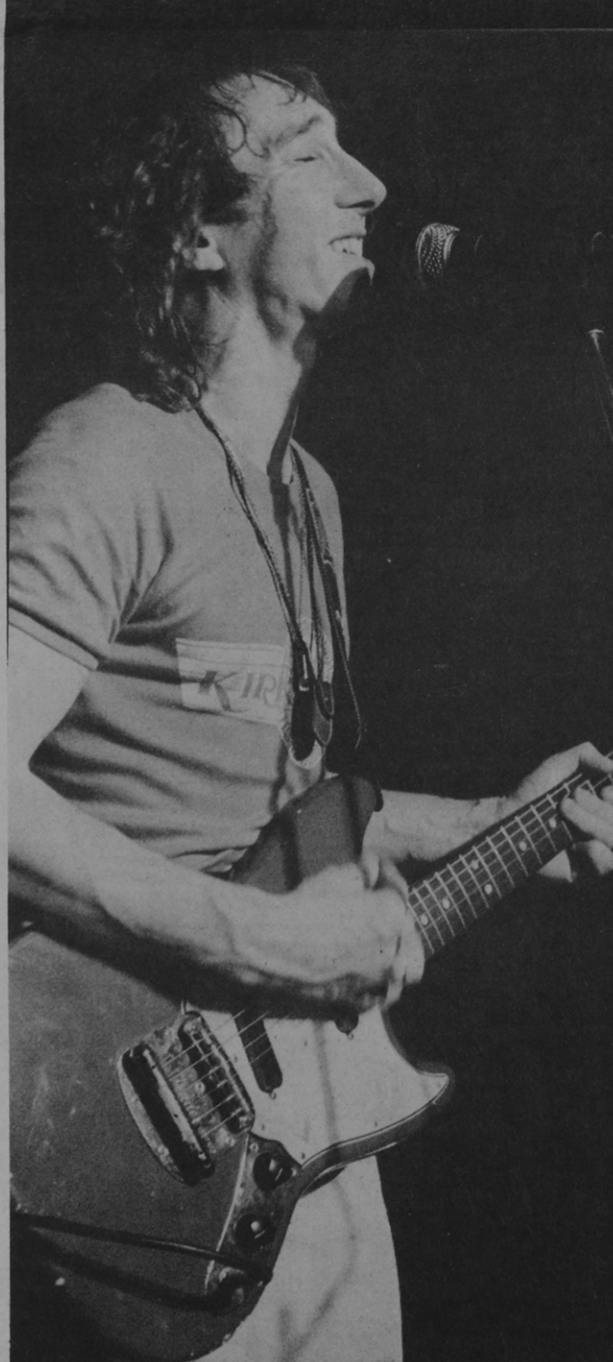
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