

Hawkins could be the best young guitarist in the country, Chris and Jessie form a strong rhythm section, plenty of offbeats on the drums, plenty of variation on the bass.

Watch out for "Fat Man", a staccatto Bob Dylan tribute in vitriol, and "Maximum Speed" — the Saturday night audience stood trial to this unstructured, complex and overwhelming musical arms race, the band's personal show of power and promise. This band has the biggest following in Wellington.

Auckland's Features got the crowd mobilised with a hybrid songlist and range of styles, about 70 percent original material with some cleverly revamped covers. ("Do You Wanna Know a Secret" played as a fractured romance.)

Jed Town, (guitar), Chris Orange, (bass), James Pinker, (drums), and Karel Van Bergen, (vocals), have released an EP, ("City Scenes", "Police Wheels", "Secrets") featuring their best song. This is a crisp and impressive debut record.

In contrast to Shoes, the Features are clean and tight. Their most successful songs, "City Scenes", "Police Wheels", "What Are You Gonna Do Tonight", are distinctive and dramatic. Jed Town is another talented and proficient guitarist. Chris is a bass player you could hang your dancing shoes on, and with borrowed instruments James Pinker and Karel Van Bergen made a fair showing — some breakneck drumming, some adenoïdal howling, emphatic bass and scouring guitar.

The Features' manifesto jam, "Wanting War", compulsively syncopated with melodic vocals and airsiren guitar, parallels Maximum Speed as the band's tour de force. Most people danced.

The Features are a synthesis of punk and pop, and unlike Shoes, much of their music lacks internal cohesion. Where the members' individual styles meet successfully the band produces clever, unpredictable, palatable songs.

Both bands are fresh, this year's models, worth watching.

JJ

#### TECHTONES

STATION HOTEL, JULY 2.

Unfortunately, the Techtones have a pedigree. I say unfortunately because having a pedigree means having to live up to it.

Fortunately, the Techtones are far more than the sum of their parts. They have a pop sensibility second to none, and write outstandingly good material. Whereas Sheerlux suffered from being cloyingly chic, and knowing it, and Picture This lacked any sort of punch, the Techtones are a fine, unpretentious band in the tradition of the Flaming Groovies and Badfinger.

They played 90% original material with one or two good covers. Most of the originals are sixties-tinged, with a special nod to the Beatles, but they have a real aura of freshness —

especially the soap operatic, "Shed a Tear", and the superb "That Girl". The Honeycombs' "Have I The Right" is instantly recognisable, as is the Beatles' "You Can't Do That".

Although they are not startlingly innovative, the Techtones seem to soar at times. In the words of another, Highly Recommended.

Simon Grigg

#### TOP SCIENTISTS

WINDSOR CASTLE — JULY 8

If you ever saw Wellington band Rough Justice you'll be familiar with Top Scientist, Rick Bryant. His alcohol soaked vocals and fluent fingered sax playing form the nucleus of both hands.

They say variety is the spice of life and it was definitely the rule for this Tuesday night. An extremely well mixed crowd of punters gave a spirited response to the Top Scientist's bag of musical allsorts. Principle influence is the East side soul sound of bands like the Ashbury Dukes and the E-Street Band. Reggae guitar riffs also feature very strongly though they are played with an upfront rock feel.

Their repertoire is mostly original. "Trouble Now" and "Rocking and Reeling" both employ the reggae emphasis to full effect, and "Stranglehold" featuring keyboardist/guitarist John Malloy on vocals has an almost Lou Reed street feeling to it. Covers were few and far between — obviously a good sign. "What's So Funny About Peace, Love and Understanding" received the best treatment, while "Girls Talk" fell apart around their ears.

Not a bad evening all round. All that remains to be seen, is whether Top Scientists have the formula for success.

Mark Phillips

#### MI-SEX

LOGAN CAMPBELL CENTRE, JUNE 22

The average age of the punters who turned out to the Mi-Sex concerts couldn't have been any more than 14 or 15, which says loads for their commercial pulling power. They're a pop band who want to sell a million and who tailor their music for as wide an audience as possible.

Their songs are strong on melody and their lyrics, while hardly being poetry, still don't insult the intelligence. They judge their audience well and set out to give it what it wants, a fast, tight, energetic, spectacular and very entertaining show.

The stage act leaps from one high spot to another. Those long months on the road in Australia, the United States and Canada have honed it down to just over 60 minutes, with no padding and no drop in pace. Every number is delivered with maximum effort, every song is known by the audience, and contains a hookline or chant that they can sing and thus feel part of the performance. That's important in winning followers.

From the moment they come on stage, Mi-

Sex set out to generate enthusiasm, as Steve Gilpin's melodramatic stage announcements are punched home by the aggressive bassline of "Graffiti Crimes".

It's a show filled with colour and movement which demands, and gets, attention. Mi-Sex are in the business of giving pleasure to people. And if that's not cultural, I don't know what is.

Duncan Campbell

#### TAJ MAHAL

MAINSTREET, JUNE 24

One can indeed have too much of a good thing. The sheer length of Taj Mahal's night at Mainstreet served to diminish the impact of this extraordinary performing musicologist.

After a lengthy wait, Taj ambled on stage with an electric guitar to pick some blues, notably the smile-making "Fishin' Blues", before he was joined by his five-man International Rhythm Band, which launched into a Caribbean-tinged version of Elizabeth Cotton's venerable "Freight Train".

The 65 minutes of the first set saw some of the finest music ever laid down in Auckland.

Taj's guitar and the sax/drums/bass/congas/steel drums combination of his band set up some exhilarating rhythms, with the melodic steel drums of Robert Greendidge a revelation of those of us who in the past have associated

the instrument with West Indies travelogues of the "sun sinks slowly in the west" variety.

Notable in this mellow 10-song set were "Corinna," a "Satisfied and Tickled To" that did Mississippi John Hurt proud, a rollicking "Good Morning, Miss Brown" which had many of the capacity crowd up and dancing, and "The Big Blues", a blues in '50s Chicago style featuring Taj's hilarious, but effective, impersonation of the late Howling Wolf.

A seemingly interminable 45 minute intermission followed and when the band again took the stage they had lost the edge of the earlier performance. With the songs providing the basis for long, meandering jams the next hour and three quarters drifted, some times pleasantly, some times aimlessly. Only occasionally, as on the reggae "Johnny Too Bad" or "Good Morning, Little Schoolgirl", did things reach previous heights. Two ballads with Taj on electric piano were particularly uninspiring.

It was with a feeling of exhaustion rather than elation that one staggered on to Queen Street 1 am.

With a little more recognition of the maxim "less is more" this might have been one great concert. As it was, one hopes to see more of Taj Mahal in future, but with the best stuff concentrated into a shorter set. His plan to set up residence in Fiji should ensure that his return to these shores won't be too far away.

Ken Williams

# TOP SCIENTISTS

JULY 14-16

WINDSOR CASTLE

JULY 17-19

XS, 7 AIREDALE ST  
SAT AFTERNOON, JULY 19  
WINDSOR CASTLE

JULY 23

STATION HOTEL  
SAT AFTERNOON, JULY 26  
WINDSOR CASTLE

JULY 29-30

GLUEPOT

AUGUST 1

VARSITY REC CENTRE  
SAT AFTERNOON, AUGUST 2  
WINDSOR CASTLE

AUGUST 6-9

LADY HAMILTON

AUGUST 14-16

& SAT AFTERNOON, AUGUST 16  
WINDSOR CASTLE

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