

LETTERS

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GREAT!
Phil O'Brien Christchurch

Where's the Newtones? I really liked them before XTC. At the XTC concert they were great, the main band didn't stand a chance. Would the person/s who puts bands in the Gladstone, put the Newtones in and not wimpy North Island bands like Flight X7.
TG Christchurch

In defence of Connie D. Martin ...
If bands such as she writes about (those interested in writing and performing new music) were to be ignored and not given serious consideration, where would boring middle-of-the-road bands like Glasshouse, Puppetz, Red and Backstreet — who all garner their inspiration from the innovations of others — get their ideas from? All of them are just out-of-date copyists!
At last there's widespread initiative in New Zealand. There are new bands like the Gordons and Shoes This High. Though Fridge Exists and Wallsockets are not in the same class, they are also interested in creating something different.
With Split Enz achieving success overseas, surely people should now be aware of the need to encourage real attempts by NZ bands to develop their own sound. What we need is an atmosphere of critical yet sympathetic interest.

I'm glad RIU published CDM's Wellington Rumours and (breath) will continue to do so in the future.
Alice Wellington
EDITOR: CDM has been replaced as the young lady neglected to write a Wellington Rumours for the October RIU. (Was this because we hadn't paid for the EXTRA 1 story?) We trust that our new writer will do Rumours and a live review for every issue. But RIU hopes Connie and her photographer boyfriend will do a feature for the December EXTRA.

I think it's disgusting the way you gave John Bonham's death only a few lines and a photo. You give all the illegitimate punk/new wave bands most of the paper, while the greatest rock band in the world gets stuff all. There should have been some sort of article on them!
Jimmy Page Christchurch

Dear Devastating Darlene,
If you really haven't heard anyone say anything bad about your "pet" band's gigs? Let me be the first!
No, no, I didn't mean to say that at all. What I meant to say all along was how much I agree with your kind letter of concern. A girl has to use pseudonyms these days in order not to be shot down in flames after trying to do something constructive, like your letter for example. This is especially true in a place as small as Wellington where the people are even smaller on the whole.
I would suggest that you and me get together one night, you know, just to discuss tips on painting our nails, journalist technique, etc, etc.
Connie D. Martin Wellington

Subjects, The Red Rock Theatre, October 16.

Although neither band turned in one of its most memorable performances, each confirmed its position among the leaders of Wellington's class of 80.
The Subjects, pretty much the musicians' musicians, aim for the cranium. Their lyrics are obscure/meaningful rather than mundane/goofy, and their basic catchy pop is coloured with a strong jazz influence. This is particularly evident in the guitar of Greg McKenzie who obviously knows more about modal theory than is currently chic.
Their performance was clean, tight and controlled, despite the preponderance of hardcore Red fans. This judgement, depending on your point of view, sums up the band's great virtue and its great vice. They can be relied on never to lose control and deliver a less than impressive musical performance, but they never lose control at the other end of the scale, and produce something more — an event. They still rate, though, as the only three-piece band around that doesn't sound like a four-piece with something missing.

The Red, descended from early capital punk outfit, Ambitious Vegetables, grab for the groin. Despite the turnover in personnel, the mutation from the city's most accessible punk band to its most raucous pop group seems quite natural.

In keeping with their almost legendary reputation for bad luck, two out of four members are on the walking wounded list. The resulting messiness was irritating, if far from fatal. The Red are an out and out dance band, however, and quite happy to trade a few degrees of precision for overall effect, and on this occasion the overall effect was spot on — they could have danced all night. The disadvantage of this approach is that the distinctiveness of individuals is dulled in the interests of keeping the show thumping.

Still, both bands impress as contenders for higher honours in 81 who could each learn a trick or two from the other.

Les Crew

The Gordons Rumba Bar, October 20.

The Gordons have no image, and in a way that is their image. Onstage, they virtually seem oblivious of the audience, or what there was of it on this night. Still, that is definitely preferable to so many band's pre-programmed responses.

It would be hard to categorize the Gordons' music, and it's probably better not to try. Suffice to say that they are loud, at times fast, and above all original.

The Gordons were plagued with equipment problems, which reduced them to operating in fits and starts, but this didn't impair the attack of their music. Unfortunately, the volume obscured the lyrics at times, although after hearing their superb single, this is probably intentional. Despite this, the Gordons' music has a degree of rhythmic subtlety that most bands totally lack, and the inventiveness of the songs cannot be denied.

Add to this Brent McLaughlin's individual drumming, and the fact that Alister Parker and John Halvorsen swap bass and guitar duties periodically, and you have a band out of the ordinary. And, yes, you can dance to them.
Simon Grigg

Spelling Mistakes, Screaming Meemees XS, 7 Airedale St, Nov 1.

Spelling Mistakes, having literally played themselves off the market, downed instruments for the last time at XS on Saturday night. Despite being hampered by the lack of a flanger and fuzzbox stolen from the stage the previous night, Spelling Mistakes gave us one and a half hours of the kind of pop/rock we've come to expect. Their particular mix of covers (Ramones, Sex Pistols, Beatles) and originals like the outstanding 'Another Girl', 'I Wanna Be a Mod', 'No Image' and their hit single 'Feels So Good' were delivered gutsy and loud in one

of their best performances ever.
* The audience of 250, which broke the door record (previously held by Spelling Mistakes) went berserk dragging frontman Nicky Hanson off stage and, apparently unhappy with his vocal abilities, tried to do better themselves. Despite a few minor technical hassles, from the humour on stage it seemed that the band enjoyed themselves as much as the audience, perhaps relieved that this was the end.

Spelling Mistakes ended their nineteen month musical existence predictably with the chauvinist 'Reena' which had the whole place rocking and pogoing. On that note ended the last of the second wave of punk bands. You gotta move with the times.

Support band the Screaming Meemees played a raging set of sixties-influenced originals and covers to an apathetic audience — they deserve better. Covers included the Troggs' 'Wild Thing', 'Twist and Shout' and the Monkees' 'Stepping Stone' but the set was 90 percent original. All these were great and 'See Me Go' and 'All Dressed Up' were outstanding. The members Peter Van Der Fluit (bass, keyboards), Joh Landwer (drums), vocalist Tony Drumm and guitarist Michael O'Neill (the latter two are responsible for most of the songwriter) dislike labels, but agree to having their music described as post-beat psychedelia. Screaming Meemees are certainly moving with the times.

Karen Stevens

The Steroids Rumba Bar, October 23.

The Steroids are a three-piece Wellington punk combo, nothing more, nothing less. Visually they are drab and uninspiring, musically, they fare only slightly better.

Performing a standard set of covers and originals, they lock into a '77 thrash that only succeeds in setting ears ringing in a room as small as the Rumba Bar. Influences are not hard to spot, guitarist Alan Jimson has them displayed on the badges attached to his guitar strap.

Standout songs, significantly, are the covers. The Gang of Four's 'Damaged Goods' and 'Armalite Rifle', and the Cure's 'Subway Song' are all perfect in every detail. The band's own material has a tendency towards the overblown and tedious, but they did show flashes of lyrical genius on 'Stay Glued To Your TV Set'. Their self-released single, 'Mr. Average' gains strength from live performance, becoming far more intense than on vinyl.

Auckland has had to wait a long time for this visit from the Steroids. I for one was disappointed.

Mark Phillips

Hattie and the Havana Hotshots My Cousin's Cafe, Nov 1.

My Cousin's Cafe is part of the Punters and Rogues fleamarket, in the bowels of deepest Newmarket. Very basic decor and furniture, plenty of room to dance and a tiny stage at one end.

Hattie and the Havana Hotshots have a regular Saturday gig at the cafe, playing until the wee small hours. They're funny and friendly, as well as being a damn good bunch of musicians devoted to making people happy.

A guitarist-singer, bass player, drummer and two horn players, plus up front, big, beautiful Hattie, built for comfort, not for speed, and one helluva singer. She can belt out the blues with the best of them, when she isn't shaking this thing or that thing.

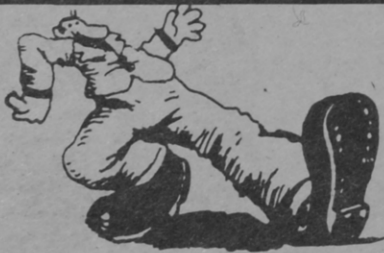
Their repertoire is wide-ranging, covering Randy Newman, Jimmy Cliff and Joan Armatrading, along with lotsa R&B and traditional blues numbers. They make Cousins jump.

In a musical climate where bands are constantly practising oneupmanship, seeing who can be the most obscure and progressive, Hattie and the Havana Hotshots are refreshingly old-fashioned, preaching the philosophy that music should help you forget your worries.

Hell, they even made me forget my hangover.
Duncan Campbell

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