

AND SO ON

'PARTY' FROM PAGE 12
"You walk on stage and everyone applauds before you've done anything. You announce a song that no one's ever heard before and they all applaud like it's your hit single and you play the whole set incredibly badly and fuck everything up and they all cheer and applaud and ask for encores and you think, well this is fantastic, isn't it, nobody can tell whether we played really badly or incredibly well, so what's the point?"
"If you were in a group that was incredibly popular and famous and so forth it would just happen so much it would just be not worth it. That was one of the reasons we wanted to break up in Australia the last time. Because of the routine of playing in Australia and the things we were subjected to and people weren't thinking about what we were doing."
"It was there and they wanted it to be a big event so they made it one. I mean there were so many times when we played last year when we were fucking appalling and the crowd just acted like we were great because they wanted us to be great."
But surely that's only human?
"Of course it's human. But that doesn't make it good."

So would you consider deliberately turning out a bad performance to shed sycophantic fans?
"No. I mean, we have played as offensively as possible because there's no other way we can act in a situation of people acting like Pavlov's Dogs. The only way you can shake them out of that is to be as childish and petty as possible, which is something I really despise to do. But it's just totally against the grain for the Birthday Party to stand up on stage and smile and get thunderous applause knowing full well that we're not doing something worthwhile at the time."

"I think our group is capable of being one of the best groups I can think of and easily the worst. Because when we're bad we're so bad. We just act like a bunch of morons. And I'd hate to have us any other way."
"The groups I like to see are the ones who are capable of collapsing into the depths of whatever. Because they are human, for Christ's sake."

P is for Prelude
Nick and Roland wander up the stairs of Mainstreet, probably aware that people have been waiting for the rehearsal to begin. Nick is finishing a milkshake — everybody thought they'd been at the pub. Roland plugs his guitar in on stage and starts playing screeching riffs, feeding back. Tracy Pew appears, he really is

like he looks in the pictures. Tracy and Des take the stage, Roland is still making guitar noises. Tracy unplugs Roland's guitar and says something sharp. Nick gives one of his sighs, picks up the bottle of whisky on the table and heads towards the stage.
All of a sudden, things are very different. The music, especially Cave's giant, gruff voice, dominates. From being a large, empty, cold place, the club suddenly seems too small for the music. From a dead cold start the Birthday Party have whipped up something frightening but exhilarating. And this is only practice.
Nick Cave has his back turned to the dozen or so people watching.

P is for Performance
Nick Cave has his arm wrapped around someone's head. He's leaning over that person staring wildly into someone's eyes. The showman/shaman inside him has taken over.
The show is breathtaking, a killer punch. The songs are slow and wonderful. Suddenly, it's over.
Nick was right. A lot of people weren't satisfied. But that was only because they wanted more. The band had managed to rehearse seven songs with Des — they played them all.
Backstage, the applause and chants for an encore are simply making the band more miserable — a silly situation. They can't play any more songs and they aren't about to go out and play something twice. It's a matter of principle.
But as the man said, there's no guarantee on the Birthday Party. People complained about not getting their money's worth. They shouldn't judge performances in monetary terms.

And On Into the Sunset?
This current tour is almost certainly the last which will see the Birthday Party together as a "band".
Roland: "We decided that the Birthday Party was going to become a group that would operate outside the normal terms of being a group. Stop being a financial thing and be something that was purely a creative form of expression."
The band will go back to Europe to pursue their own individual projects until at least the end of the year.
But that doesn't mean no more Birthday Party records. They have already recorded new material for their new label, Mute and they'll get back into the studio and/or play live when they "really, really want to".
But they're off the treadmill. Artists with obligations only to themselves.
So, in a sense the Birthday Party are stepping out of Rock. Perhaps it's for the best.
Russell Brown



JUNE			
6	GLUEPOT	27	GOLDEN CENTRAL
7	WAIKATO UNIVERSITY		ALEXANDRA
8, 9	ALBION, GISBORNE	28, 29	ALBERT NITECLUB
10, 11	LENNONS, HASTINGS		QUEENSTOWN
13, 14	CRICKETERS	JULY	
	WELLINGTON	30, 1, 2	SHORELINE, DUNEDIN
16-18	HILLSBOROUGH	5, 6	RUTLAND, WANGANUI
22, 23	OLDMILL, TIMARU	7-9	BELLBLOCK
24, 25	WAIKIWI		NEW PLYMOUTH
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