

# big day out



Photo by Becky Nunes

Solid Gold Hell

## BIG DAY OUT Mount Smart Stadium, January 20.

**F**riday, January 20, dawned looking to be a shit of a day. It was positively pissing down in the central city. Most assumed the same was happening at Mount Smart Stadium, home for a day to *The Big Day Out*.

Australasia's equivalent to the Northern Hemisphere's *Lollapalooza* returned to Auckland for the second year, this time on a grander, more adventurous scale. In 1995, *The Big Day Out* would take over the entire stadium complex and showcase 45 local and international bands. Auckland was the first stop for this travelling road show, meaning, unlike last year, we saw all the imported bands. But who says this was a bonus? On the day, many local acts chewed up and spat out several of the super-hyped headliners.

True to form, the *RipItUp* contingent arrive late, due in part to traffic snarl-ups caused by a fatal crash near the Harbour Bridge. Apologies to Love Custard Patrol.

At midday the clouds are holding on to the rain, and a decent sized crowd has gathered at Stage Five to watch **Tadpole**, who experienced a car crash of their very own on the way to the show. Understandably they're a little subdued, and are definitely not assisted by a PA that crackles and breaks up during each song. Yet they triumph, straddling the line between high-energy left-field rock and the brashness of punk. While the rhythm section move mountains in the background, all melody is carried by the voice of Kath Deeney, who along with several others, chose *The Big Day Out* to quit their bands.

Immediately following, parallel to the main stadium and under the Supertop, Christchurch's **Pumpkinhead** played a monster of a set on Stage Four.

Free time provides an opportunity to explore. Up the garden path beside Stage Five is a whole bunch of stalls and food — beware the healthy stuff! The biggest stall has been given over to *High Times* magazine, who're offering every possible item and implement the average 'erb smoker could need. Also, curiously enough, there's not a single boy in the Family Planning area picking up 'something for the weekend'.

Back in the pup tent now. Today was bassist Dave James' final show with the **Dead Flowers**. In grand style on Stage Four, they played all the hits during an outrageously good performance.

Okay, the main stage — let's have a look at it.

From the balcony of the big stand all appears to be in order. The bar is open down below the

scoreboard at one end of the field, while Stages One and Two have an overbearing effect on the overall outlook.

There's only a few things I'll walk hills for, and a flying fox is one of them. So I clamber the stairs to the top of the main stand only to discover there's a 90 minute queue. Bugger. It looks cool fun too. The trip whizzes you down to the centre of the field in 10 seconds flat.

Making do with the conventional way, I melt into the crowd for **Luscious Jackson** and California's **Offspring**. There's a keen bunch moshing in front of Stage One, but I'll never understand why. The essence of a great rock 'n' roll is a performance that almost appears meaningless or a throwaway. Calculated pop-punkers, Offspring spend too much energy cultivating spontaneity rather than trying to nail their fans to the wall. In short, Offspring are fakers.

Back up at Stage Five, Wellington's **Bilge Festival** attracted a very limited number for their selection of tangled and grating guitar histrionics. Any energy there was, was turned inwards. What audience there was, was ignored. All they needed was four walls and it would've been a proper practice.

Today's a day for departures. Fiona McDonald and Michael Lawry will be **Headless Chickens** no longer after this set. Better make the most of it. Who ever wrote the set list is a genius and knows how to thrill a crowd. Up in the pit, the faithful are surfing and surging out of control, it doesn't get any better than this.

By now the clock is reading six, and the stadium continues to fill with people — many of whom have obviously not come for the music. The dodgem cars situated next to the Supertop are in constant demand and there's even a queue at the spacies.

**Upper Hutt Posse** are 20 minutes late arriving on Stage Four, so they have their set cut short after 'E Tu' and a swinging version of 'Ragga Girl'.

On Stage Two, **Shihad** are trucking through their 45 minutes and tie with the Chickens as the highlight of the day. 'Derail' is as intense as ever, and the forthcoming single 'You Again' pins your ears back with its power. Masterful.

**Primal Scream** are turds. They encompass everything that's bad about English indie guitar bands. They excel at being weak and whiny, and haven't a fucking clue how to rock.

The rest of my day out will be spent in the big tent.

**Sisters Underground** are doing it on Stage Four at 8.30pm. They've acquired a DJ and, surprisingly, a collection of jazz-flavoured tunes. The focal point is still the magnificent voices of Brenda and Hasana, and 'In The

Neighbourhood' is still the slice of pop brilliance it always was. It must be said though, singers of this calibre deserve to be backed by a tight, funky band, rather than a temperamental DAT machine.

The **Otara Millionaires Club** sound painfully thin tonight, due to a mysterious lack of bass in the mix. All rap interludes that were a major ingredient during previous OMC shows have been scrapped in favour of the soulful vocals of Paul Fuemana. He's the owner of a strong set of lungs, but the booming rhymes were definitely needed this evening.

Australian techno outfit the **Severed Heads** followed soon after on Stage Three — Depeche Mode on speed. Next.

**Supergroove** are up against **Ministry** at 10pm, but still pull a crowd of thousands into the tent. They enter, the kids go apeshit, and it's impossible to move in any direction except up and down for the next three quarters of an hour. Phenomenal.

Finally, **Fundamental**. Up front the sound is deafening, and the bass booms deep enough to rattle your bones. Frontman Propa-Ghandi is a maniac on stage. His face covered with a headscarf, he swings his arms madly around his head while leaping about the stage. 'Wrath Of A Black Man' is the highlight — samples scream from the PA while Ghandi raps at high speed. A fine end to a day that was long. My only feeling of disappointment is that I didn't lay my eyes on Drew Barrymore.

JOHN RUSSELL

**I** spend the first hour of my day at the Big Day Out wandering around and around, trying to figure out what was where and why I had to wait in lines for 10 minutes to get in a certain direction. I find out the queues are because of the areas that the people are allowed to drink 'th' piss' in. I decide to avoid these areas very early on in the piece, but this is near impossible, as they block the way to the Supertop, Stage One and Stage Two. So, I wait in line with all the people who are desperate to get 'loaded' or 'shitfaced' for the day, then some unpleasant woman accuses me of being underage, as I try to get into the 'area', and violently puts a pretty yellow plastic doodaky around my wrist. I am now free to walk through the 'area', and to my destination, which is Stage One, to see one of my favourite bands **You Am I**. Now, because I am so frivolous, I didn't even bother to see You Am I when they played on the little stage at last year's *Big Day Out*. I didn't like them then, but I have since acquired their album and subsequently decided that I do like them very much thank you. So this year You Am I are playing the big, main stage, and deserved-

ly so. They are a happy bunch, who obviously like each other, and very much enjoy playing their music, which consists of gorgeously crafted, poppy songs, full of melody, but 'going off' at the same time. They churned through their set with happy abandon and enthusiasm, and served up many a favourite ditty including 'Adam's Ribs', 'Jaimme's Got A Girl' and their tasty new song, 'Cathy's Clown'.

Later on Stage One, I'm watching the **3Ds**, who I usually find quite mesmerising. Today, however, they had a few technical troubles, which chopped the flow of the set up somewhat. Shortly after a slightly shaky version of 'Beautiful Things', Dave Mitchell's guitar amp died or something. David, Denise and Dom decided to do a song on their own, which was going along nicely, until David Saunder's amp followed suit. They appeared to fix their technical problems up fairly smartly thereafter, and continued with a much stronger and very spunky set. After the initial problems, they were one of the few bands of the day whose sound rang clear around the stadium.

After a solid 10 minute walk, push and shuffle, I finally made it to the Supertop to see Australian teen rock stars **Silverchair**. I didn't realise just quite how popular Silverchair were. As the band arrived on stage, the crowd, well the girls at least, *all started screaming really loudly*. This startled me a lot and made me think several things of this phenomenon: a) I am really old; b) I must be really outta touch; c) (with misplaced righteousness) I'm really in touch and every one else isn't because I liked this style of music ages ago; d) why are the girlies screaming at boys who look like any other teen boys? It must be their *talent*. I was confused, but there's no doubt these little sons-of-guns can play the grungy, rocky, metal thing very well indeed. The sound in the Supertop was far superior to that outside on the main stages, and this helped a lot. When guitarist/singer Daniel stepped on his over-drive/grungy pedal thing for the 'rock' bits of their songs — well heck, it was quite powerful of sorts really. They were good. They were cute. There's no doubt as to who influences them, being all that grunge sorta music. There was hair everywhere from the bass player and the drummer, and Daniel has a very accomplished and rich voice. I forgot they were so young until Daniel introduced their Top 10 hit 'Tomorrow' as 'Big Fat Hairy Scrotum'. Teenage boys eh!

My next goal was to decide where to put myself in order to see **Hole**. I decided not to wedge myself in between people's bodies that I didn't know, so I had to stand back a fair way. I found a nice elevated spot of sorts that I could see the (w)hole (hah!) band from.