

# Live

SHIHAD, HEAD LIKE A HOLE  
The Mean Fiddler, London, April 26.

Walking into the Mean Fiddler tonight was like a blast from the past. Great to see men with long hair, dressed in their favourite T-shirt, with a few check shirts tied casually around their hips. I must be at a kiwi gig!

Head Like A Hole stormed the stage looking a little different. Where was the nudity, the skirts, the tribal body paint? They funk through a set of delicious rock, smiling and flirting with the 400 plus audience who filled the Mean Fiddler. I never realised what a dead sexy lot Head Like A Hole are fully infected by Spring. Sorry, I can't tell you the names of the songs, but they were performed with energy and spunk, by wild musicians who seem to have matured with a new confidence. Head Like A Hole delivered a tight set of their frantic and raucous tunes.

Shihad took up where the others left off — keeping those bodies thrashing around in the pit and the hair swinging. The stage was a bit smaller than what they have been used to supporting Faith No More through Europe, but it was great to see a drummer centre stage. Like chocolate in a coffee grinder, the sweetness and purity of Shihad's music breaks through stereotypes of rock montser bands, a category in which they definitely belong. It's a bit of a pity there wasn't a higher number of English people there. Breaking the kiwi/Aussie band stereotype is the barrier that proves to be the greatest challenge to success over here. Sure, it's from New Zealand, but it's music for the world. The two English rave chicks I took along want to know where they can buy the CDs... well Head Like A Hole have their own header card in Tower Records!

Thanks for a great night guys. Hope you'll be back this way soon.

RACHEL MEYRICK

SHERYL CROW, DAVE DOBBYN  
Logan Campbell Centre, April 28.

One would be hard pressed to find enough superlatives to describe Dobbyn's set on this night, as he ran through an aural history of his songs and made it look so easy but sound so good. Stand-out's were 'Language', 'Lap of the Gods' and a moving version of 'Loyal', which showcased the maturity of his voice. Gun slinger rhythm section, Dave 'the Enforcer' Gent and Jay Foulkes laid it down, giving the perfect platform for Dobbyn's acoustic and electric guitar work.

Walking on to a very warm welcome, Sheryl Crow stated: "I feel kinda funny playing after Dave Dobbyn, isn't he great?" The band then launched into a road

tested 'Leaving Las Vegas', 'Run Baby Run' and other tracks off her album, setting the tone for the first half of the set.

Maybe things got a little lack lustre around this point of the evening, but the enthusiasm of the audience kept things alive. As Sheryl Crow said: "I've been touring this album for eight years," a little road weariness may have come to pass.

Things lifted when the drummer moved from his kit to an ethnic hand drum, and they delivered a Kerouacian beat version of 'All I Wanna Do'. The unplugged material, with Sheryl Crow on piano accordion and excellent pedal steel from Wolf, showed the band's versatility as musicians and definitely suited the songs.

Shifting back to electric, with a great version of 'What I Can Do For You?', the band lifted for the last part of the set. All's well that ends well, and 'I Shall Believe' left the punters hungry for more.

It was a great night of contemporary music. Considering the awkward acoustics of the venue, both acts came through shining, showing live music and original music is thriving in the 90s.

GRAHAM BRAZIER

AL JARREAU, EUPHONI  
Logan Campbell Centre, April 29.

In the 1984 movie *Breakdance*, Michael 'Boogaloo Shrimp' Chambers wanders into one of those Fame-style dance classes and shows up the men in tights, breakin' like crazy to an infectious tune called 'Boogie Down'. This was my first introduction to the music of Al Jarreau. Since then it's been limited to the 'Moonlighting Theme' and the odd hit single, as I decided his voice always sounded pretty thin on record. Live though, I'd been told, he was something else.

The LCC was over three quarters full when Te Atatu vocal quintet Euphoni stepped up. Sam Cooke's 'Chain Gang' and 'Cupid' were included in their short a cappella set. While there were great harmonies involved, unaccompanied singing just doesn't move me. What's really required is a proficient, warm sounding band to make things groove — exactly the type of band Jarreau brought with him.

He strolls on all casual like, just after nine, and for the largest part of the following two hours, puts in a sparkling vocal performance. Preference is for the times when he plays it straight, as on the floaty 'We're In This Love Together' and the above mentioned TV theme, instead of the scatty vocal gymnastics that on several occasions drown in their own cleverness. His voice reaches tremendous highs and lows, and when purely effective, it's as though he's speaking in tongues.

The band, a five piece with three backing vocalists, reached boiling point almost from the word go. They played the kind of tight, complimentary set you come to expect from American show bands. Meanwhile, Jarreau managed to create an intimate atmosphere within the factory-like confines of the LCC, pausing plenty to swap jokes with the front row, fulfilling requests, including one that wasn't in the rehearsal list.

They encore with a magnificent extended version of 'CC Rider'. The whole crowd is by now out of their seats and going manic. Like I'd been told, live, he was something else.

JOHN RUSSELL

SPEARHEAD, TEREMOANA, DAM NATIVE  
Powerstation, May 3.

The vibe for this show was huge, not unequalled, but huge. Spearhead's awesome debut album *Home*, combined with a brief promotional visit to Auckland by frontman Michael Franti last year, gave a partial glimpse as to what the full band might deliver live, and set the scene for what threatened to be an outrageously good concert.

Expectations were dampened slightly upon the discovery that rapper Danny D has lost the rest of Dam Native. Only DJ DLT remains from the original line-up. On a good night, Dam Native were an unstoppable 'live' rap group. This evening, the performance to DAT tapes churns my stomach, and even a guest appearance by the exceptionally talented Sonny Sagala (ex-Pacific Descendants) fails to liven things up. Why go backwards?

Teremoana falls into the same trap. Although her voice is as strong and beautiful as always, the contrast with the rigid, precise backing accompaniment means it's not all it could be. Half an hour later, Spearhead prove that nothing can beat a good live band.

The Powerstation is jammed for their arrival, and immediately the combination of moshing and dancing begins in earnest. Franti has changed his flavour big time since he was last here on stage with the Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy. Gone is the hard hitting, confrontational approach — in its place, a soulful, seductive, blend of funk, reggae, and rap.

The big grooves of *Home* sound more huge live, as the terrifically funky seven-piece band bounced through 'Love Is Tha Shit', 'Positive', 'Of Course You Can', and a tremendous jam version of 'Runfayalife'.

The only puzzling element to the whole set was the constant on-stage presence of a George Clinton lookalike called Zulu. Described by Franti as a 'vibe merchant', Zulu skulked about the place, occasionally grunting something into his mic, and was more deserving of the title 'free loader'.

The band disappeared for the first encore, a sparse rendition of 'Home', then returned for the finale, an all in hootenanny version of 'People In Tha Middle'.

Spearhead managed to do what many of their genre can't — deliver live. It's wonderful to see a band who show, and keep, their promise.

JOHN RUSSELL

FOREIGNER, THE DOOBIE BROTHERS  
Mount Smart Supertop, May 4.

Upon hearing of my going to this gig, my good friend Kathy said: "You fuckin' loser!" Upon learning I was reviewing it, she said: "Well, I s'pose that's alright then." Then, upon learning that it was at my request, she reiterated her first point. Such is the

esteem, or lack thereof, that is held for tonight's bands in some quarters.

Gone are the days when it was safe (cool) to be 'Rockin' Down the Highway' with a beer in one hand and a big phat booty blunt making road maps of your eyes in the other. But it's an era 8,000 or so friendly punters were more than willing to invoke, happily assisted by the greatest hits from both bands.

First up: the Doobie Brothers, now in their twenty-fifth year and featuring four original members in their line up of eight musicians. The mix is good and the band is tight, as they run through a couple of newer songs before the familiar intro to 'Taking It to the Streets' sets the crowd really rocking. A brief semi-acoustic set brings a lull to the proceedings, but is nonetheless highly appreciated, before the band launch full on into their popular back catalogue.

Standout tracks are a sound version of 'China Grove', an extended jam on the staccato funk gem that is 'Long Train Running' (both from 1973's *The Captain and Me* LP); and a superb multi-harmonised version of 1974's hit 'Black Water'. They rounded off their set with Tom Johnson's 'Listen to the Music', and everyone was happy.

A short break, then it's Foreigner's turn to try and impress, but they're pushing shit uphill. This is not 1982. Only a well worked version of 'Juke Box Hero' really rises above the mire. All the hits were here: 'Cold As Ice', 'Double Vision', 'Head Games', 'Urgent', etc., but it's dull plodding stuff.

Halfway through their set my companion turns to me and says: "I feel like I've just returned from my grandmother's place up North." I kinda knew what she meant. It's a slow motion death we just have to escape to preserve our sanity. So we do.

A year on the road together as a double bill has left the Doobie Brothers as a tight, perhaps not vital, but enjoyable unit; whereas it has shown up Foreigner to be just plain tired, losing the battle to keep a shine on things. As we all know, ya can't polish a turd.

GREG HAMMERDOWN

BREATHE, LICHEN POLE  
Antipodes, May 13.

The evening's are getting chilly. The wind blows strong in these here parts. I walked into Antipodes thinking a shot of tequila was just what the good doctor said would take the edge off the day. The shot goes down a treat, but shortly after, the good doctor does something completely unexpected. He throws up. Right there, right on the floor of Antipodes. It could have been a disgusting way to start the night, yet he pulled it off so well, with such nonchalance and ease. No cause for alarm. Just a slight negative reaction.

Why this nasty tale of self-abuse? Because, like the good doctor had, Lichen Pole also pulled it off, with a great deal of ease and self-confidence.

Lichen Pole are rock stars. They would be rock stars even if they never picked up an instrument again. They just are. Resplendent in movement and attitude, they rocked through their 10-song set, highly aware of the adoration of the relatively youngish

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