

Live

SHIHAD, SHORT

The Alamo, Auckland, August 19.

Shihad in the flesh remove you from reality the way fast driving or heavy drinking never will. Spending 90 minutes at their altar results in a total sensory overload, leaving you overwhelmed, but equally primed to explode. It's a feeling that, if bottled, would make millions.

Wellington four-piece Short proved worthy openers, with a brief set of warped pop tunes lifted from their EP *Shagpile*. Solid, complex rhythms from drummer Colin Hartshorn and singer/bassist Brett Garretty make a base for the layered, intricate guitar duelling of Cliff Bateman and Stuart Brown. For many moments they parade a restrained, melodic nature ('Short Black'), before diving headlong into a grunty variation on anthemic power-pop ('Blushing'). It's pop, but not as we know it.

Less than a quarter of the number that squashed themselves into the Powerstation the evening previous have made it to the Alamo on this night. But straight from the angry opening riff of 'You Again', Shihad fill the room with a deafening, brutal noise. *Churn* and *Killjoy* get an equal showing, as they tear through 'Bitter', 'Derail', 'The Call', 'For What You Burn' and 'Screwtop', with frightening intensity.

Down the back, drummer Tom Larkin shows the skins no mercy. Lost in the sound, he belts out precise beats with a mixture of utmost grace and demonic possession, while up front, lead guitarist Jon Toogood spits and hurls lyrics with a snarl that says trust him, but don't cross him.

Without fail, every song, even a soother like 'Deb's Night Out', hits the body with a tremendous, enjoyable force, and it becomes addictive — it's escapism at its most ultimate, and who would ask for that to end? The staunchness of 'Gimme Gimme' begins and ends with Karl Kippenberger's killer bass line, and the encores, 'Clapper-loader' and 'Factory', wind up a technically perfect, and deeply soulful performance — a knockout combination which makes them the best live band I've ever had the privilege to witness. Over 80 shows in a row in Europe have seen Shihad take themselves to another level, and without a single doubt, they're in a league all on their own.

JOHN RUSSELL

SEMI LEMON KOLA, NOTHING AT ALL, STUMP THUMPER, MASTER CHEESE MAKER
Wild Horse Saloon, Palmerston North, August 4.

Things get underway late, considering there are four bands, but you get that when you're allowed to stay up late thanks to friendly man-

agement. Master Cheese Maker have been gigging often recently, and either that, or more practice, makes them a tight act; only it would seem Faith No More already have the same ground covered. More of the weirdness I witnessed last time I saw them (random tape noise, no apparent song form) would be a better direction than semi-original/covers of a well known band.

As for randomness and lack of song form, Stump Thumper have it out of control, and exude straight forward, fucked-in-the-head musical attitude. Solid drumming continues through the guitar/bass squall, and the odd vocal sound segues out of it all. Totally beautiful, and something that should be experienced by everyone at least once.

If the major record companies had enough sense to look past Green Day et al, they would offer Nothing At All vast amounts of money and drugs, sign them up, put out a Number 1 album, and everybody would be rich. NAA! have all the new punk ethics and better songs. They even existed before the record companies got to the scene and ruined it. Slightly put off by a crazy old guy who pours beer on the guitarist and yells abuse about being louder (NAA! only ever put the vocals through the PA — yeah!), things don't go as well as they could for NAA!, but they still rock. See them if you are ever within 100 kilometres.

Semi Lemon Kola finish the evening. I am seriously thinking long and hard about this... they are essentially bollocks. Compotent but unimaginative pop/funk/rock that the masses simply don't care for. The funk is fake, the pop is neither clever or catchy, and they don't understand rock like, say, the Nixons or Dead Flowers. Having gone nowhere for so long, they should stop before they get seriously in debt for no good reason.

CRAIG BLACK

1995 SMOKEFREE ROCKQUEST GRAND FINAL
Auckland Town Hall, August 18.

Stuffed down a toilet in the men's is an empty bottle of Mississippi Moonshine, its owner long gone, leaving only a sea of vomit as a calling card. Around the handbasins, a five-strong group of Rockquest kids are toking like mad on rollies — it would appear the message ain't gettin' through. Don't ya just love rock 'n' roll!

At 8pm, No Man's Land in the Town Hall is just over half full, with a sizeable crowd up in the circle also. On stage are the opening act, **Rock Scissors Dynamite**, non-competitors who play a passable cover of the Headless Chickens' 'George'.

The first band under the judge's scrutiny are the obvious crowd favourites, a three-piece called **Decaf**. The singer was previously in Ulcer, who did the post-Seattle thing with considered finesse. He now sports black eyeliner and lipstick, painted on teardrops, and a Therapy? T-shirt — whatever turns you on. An industrial/pop mix is their current choice of flavour, and a direct rip-off of Shihad's 'Derail' is rewarded with the

biggest cheer of the evening.

No **Compromise**, from Hillmorton High School, had my vote for second place. They'd make ideal stadium rockers, recognising and using to full effect the true comical aspects of a 'rawk' performance. The boisterous, noisy pop/rock of 'Super Rollercoaster Man' was one of the evening's major highlights.

Wellington's **Hipo** recall the dark days of the Deep Sea Racing Mullets and Rumblefish — pedestrian funk/pop, lacking in substance, soul and sassiness. And nothing uncovers a lack of ideas more than head-to-toe body paint.

The real deal occurred next. Manurewa's James Cook High School sent the 8-piece group **Belle** to the Rockquest, and they should have cleaned up. With four vocalists out front, they came across as a female version of the Four Tops, all sweet harmonies, and catchy melodies — and that's not all. The lead vocalist had a voice to match Patti Labelle, and with a tight funk outfit backing up, they crooned straight in as my pick of the bunch.

"It's party time!" hollered **Dilla's** singer, and a grungey power ballad sent me in search of a Coke.

Hamilton's **Epic** were just that. Resplendent in matching black leather waistcoats, they strolled out, plugged in, punched the air, and announced: "We're here to rock." Epic rock on the slightly slower side of speed metal, as displayed in the heavy grooves of 'Shadows Of Darkness.' A cool aside was the choreographed air punching to accentuate drum beats.

The drummer belonging to **Terrapin** had bright green hair and executed a fine stage dive at Shihad's Powerstation show later in evening, that being the more impressive performance. 'Minties in A Minor' may be a clever song title, but tossing sweets to the crowd while jamming guitar chords ain't gonna make you memorable.

Nelson's **Polyp** got off to a false start, but covered well. They put in the most left-of-centre set of the show. Two songs were heavily guided by a deep, monotonous bass, while the vocals were spoken in a eerie, psychotic drawl, by a girl wearing a butcher's outfit. The meat obsession continued with an odd closing tune called 'Pork Chop'.

More body paint, this time covering the members, so to speak, of Avondale's **Spank**. They choose to play the 'sensitive, angst-ridden' card, either because they haven't yet learned to kick out the jams, or they're hoping a naive young wallflower will mistake this pathetic behaviour for loner-cool, and they might get some action. Either way, they're churning out contrived wimpy pop. Back o' the class.

Hastings' **Dancing Azians** first song was about getting out of Hastings, while their second concentrated on elevators — 'Elevators', I think it was called. But they had this huge, ominous sound going on, that was cut up occasionally with slices of squealing feedback, and was immensely diggable. Third, I reckon.

Finally, **Mookie** from Melville High let go two drawn-out Pearl Jam ballads, both featuring a high quotient of wanker guitar solos — the kind of band that makes you wanna pack a piece.

While the judging panel (Bic Runga of *Music Nation*, Pagan Records' Trevor Reekie, and

Glenn Common of the *Rockquest* committee) brainstormed upstairs, Auckland band *Jungle Fungus* killed some time for the audience. If anyone tells you these guys don't sound like Supergroove, punch them in the mouth and tell them they're talking shit. Off!

"The moment you've all," etc. First place went to the *Dancing Azians*. They won an EP release on Pagan and a 5,000 dollar NZ On Air video grant. *Decaf* took out second, and *Spank* came in third.

Same time next year then.

JOHN RUSSELL

FAITH NO MORE, PUMPKINHEAD, DEAD FLOWERS

Wellington Show Building, Wellington, August 5

Never send a Zombie to do a person's job. After much sleeplessness, a merry little band of mainland metal enthusiasts arrived bleary-eyed at the Show Building, a delightful structure obviously inspired by the neo-aircraft hangar revivalist school of architecture.

The attractive Machine Age brutalism of the outside was complemented by the Antarctic air conditioning system inside, designed so that boisterous patrons could slam and stage dive above the concrete floor for hours without breaking into a sweat.

When the Dead Flowers took to the stage jolly early, there was little chance of a massive sweat breakout. Hands were kept firmly placed in parkas and dungarees as the Dead Flowers gave, if not quite their all, then very nearly their all (the odd goatee or fingernail may have been slyly shirking). When lead vocalist Bryan Bell ditched his guitar, the energy level seemed to increase as he projected himself out onto the audience, magically transforming from second rhythm guitarist to dynamic frontman.

After a brief physical collapse, it was time to rejoin what had almost become a crowd and experience a rollicking Pumpkinhead set. On an energy and enthusiasm level, Pumpkinhead's set rated the maximum number of Berroccas. This was the kind of set where even the songs you hate seemed to have some sort of redeeming value. 'Nark' arrived, and suddenly made complete sense. 'Rat rat rat,' sang Brent, but he really meant 'don't rat' — unless you want to be a 'Nark' (undercover narcotics agent, to those not hep to 5.0 speak). The highlight was Aaron's furious rendition of 'I Like'. Bravely striding to the front of the stage, metaphorically naked, without the protection of his guitar, Aaron's body moved in ways human bodies aren't supposed to. As he roared his mighty death metal roar, his complexion took on the colour of boiled rhubarb, and fragments of vocal chord splattered every which way.

Following a short break, it was time for the main attraction, the big bananas... Faith No More. Here is also where physical tiredness exacted its harsh toll, and the evening became a fragmented mess... Mike Patton's a really cool frontman. Yeah, he totally vibrates (see *Loves Ugly Children* article). The heavy songs without Roddy's keyboards sound really fucking heavy. The heavy songs with keyboards kind of sound

ROCK SHOP presents



PHIL EMMANUEL
WED 6th SEPT
INJUNES JAZZ BAR 7:30 PM
(UPSTAIRS ABOVE AUCK ROCK SHOP)
Door Sales begin 6:30pm — Cost \$10

Two free Strings in every packet!!

(8 strings for the price of 6)



String your electric guitar with the quality it deserves!



by The Martin Guitar Company, U.S.A.

Sole NZ Distributor: Lyn McAllister Music Ltd.
PO Box 90014 Auckland. Ph: (09) 3034-936

Aim For The Top!

In consultation with industry and using our proven educational expertise, we offer the following in 1996:

- **Certificate in Audio Engineering and Music Production** •
A one-year stand-alone programme, or could qualify students for entry into the Diploma programme at second year level
- **Diploma in Audio Engineering and Music Production** •
- **Certificate in Special Event and Show Business Production** •
Specialised instruction and practical experience in the key areas of sound, lighting and staging
- **Contemporary Music Performance Certificate** •
Get the polish to be a professional!

Freephone 0800 800 411;
Auckland (09) 379 2653, or
Greymouth (03) 768 0411

TAI POUTINI POLYTECHNIC