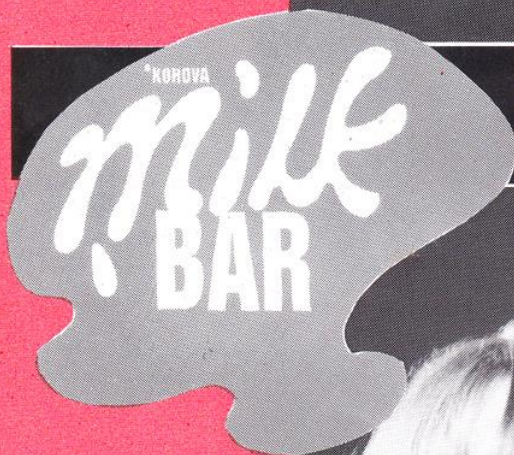


BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

Number 140

August 1992



ANNIE & COLIN
PLUG THEIR LP

LINDSEY
BUCKINGHAM:
Life
Without.....

MACK
&
THE
BOYS



HOLY
WHO?

To the uninitiated, the Big Apple's contribution to eighties folk music, may appear to have been **Tracy Chapman** and **Suzanne Vega**. We shall be digging a little deeper, to discover what other flesh the apple possesses.

Down in Greenwich Village, post Chapman and Vega, life went on. It always had. In fact, for the sake of properly developing the backdrop, this particular liad opens during the latter half of the seventies. July 2nd 1977 was the first day of trading for the Cornelia Street Cafe in Greenwich Village, NYC. During its infancy, this particular coffee house proved somewhat pivotal as the home of the Songwriters Exchange. **Carolyne Mas, Frank Christian, Steve Forbert, Rod MacDonald, Tom Intondi, David Massengill, The Roches** and **Jack Hardy** were among its numerous regular performers. The only rule to apply there was that writers were expected to perform their latest composition. Some nights, the menu would consist of pearls, on others it could be a diet of iron pyrites.

1980 saw Stash Records (the New York based jazz and blues label) issue a twelve song disc titled 'The Songwriters Exchange', which featured **Rod MacDonald, Cliff Eberhardt, David Massengill, Martha Hogan, (Elliott) Simon** and **(Lucy) Kaplanski** and **Michael Fracasso**. That project was recently given a new lease of life by Stash on CD with nine of the original cuts augmented by an equivalent number which didn't make it to the original. These days, Eberhardt records for Windham Hill/High Street Records. Massengill's truly fine debut for Flying Fish 'Coming Up For Air', has just been released, while Fracasso can be found frequenting the streets and clubs of Austin, Texas where he has just issued a self produced cassette album 'Love And Trust'. Rumours abound, that Michael will soon record a quartet album with other Austin residents **Iain Matthews, Mark Hallman** and as yet an unnamed female vocalist. Kaplanski returned to college and majored in psychology, while maintaining a secondary career as a backing vocalist.

Come 1982, Jack Hardy took the Cornelia Street Cafe session one step further, by establishing Coop/Fast Folk Records. Based on the production of a folk music magazine with an accompanying 12" LP,

ARTHUR WOOD

the concept would present folk acts, new and established, with the opportunity to place their material before a wider (listening) audience. The first release, a 1000 record pressing, soon sold out. Subsequent recordings have included the work of non New York based writers. There have even been Los Angeles and Kerrville Folk Festival special editions. In 1986, **Richard Meyer** took over as Editor and during the past year, the organisation switched formats from vinyl to CD. Although the latest issue to hit these shores, Vol. 6 No.1, still credits Meyer as Editor, I believe that Hardy has recently reassumed the Fast Folk Crown. The foregoing snapshot of one facet of New York folk music history brings us neatly to the main subject - a quartet of (recent) releases on the Shanachie label, under the banner of "New Voices, New Visions." The protagonists being **Rod MacDonald, Richard Shindell, Richard Meyer** and **Michael Jerling**. Over the past decade, each member of this quartet has regularly contributed to Fast Folk's recordings.

Born and raised in central Connecticut, MacDonald later graduated from the



ROD MacDonald

University of Virginia, worked as a correspondent for Newsweek and went on to attend Columbia Law School. Since completing his law studies in 1973, he has pursued a career as a full-time folk musician. His debut recording 'No Commercial Traffic' (1983), was followed by 'White Buffalo' (1987), 'Bring On The Lions' (1989) and 'Simple Things' (1989). 'Highway To Nowhere' is his latest US offering and draws nine cuts from the Swiss Brambus album 'Bring On The Lions' and augments them with 'Moonlight And Fire' and 'The Way To Calvary'. Since the late eighties, MacDonald has established a market for his music in Europe, principally Italy along with Switzerland, Germany and Austria.

'Norman', based on a chillingly calm conversation between 'Psycho'/Norman

Bates and his mother, opens MacDonald's Shanachie debut. 'So Many Songs' spotlights a subject close to the heart of every songwriter. That is, the act of creation and the powerful, sometimes subconscious, influence which those songs wield on all our lives. I first heard the closing track, 'The Way To Calvary' during MacDonald's 1989 set at the Kerrville Folk Festival. Immediately and indelibly etched on my psyche, the storyline relates the experiences of two runaway slaves around the time of the crucifixion. This cut alone, would mark MacDonald's eleven track set as a 1992 Best of contender.

*The New York Odyssey continues next month

Just as you feel completely folked by this column news arrives of a brand new folk club opening in the heart of Birmingham. Organised by two members of The Pink Dandelions, it takes place at The Australian Bar in Hurst Street (near The Hippodrome). **Andy Milton** and **Phil Wright**, for it is they, will be running the fortnightly club with both booked artists and floor singers featured. If you want to know more, get yourself booked or check out the August attractions call 021 459 7627 or 021 772 7936.

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ANTENNAE

Sway
(Mammoth)

Formed from the hub of Boston's recently de-funct Blake Babies, the very accomplished songwriter, John Strohm, returns with a new band and a new perspective. Now he is concentrating on creating those oh so very American guitar melodies, which inevitably invite unimaginative REM references. The songs are intelligent and varied, displaying to all the talent that Strohm possesses. Successful as it is in its own right, comparisons to his former life in the Blake Babies, is perhaps a little more justified, and on this count it falls short both for Julianna Hatfield's bitter-sweet vocals.

Mike Gayle

WOODY GUTHRIE

**The Very Best Of/
Legend Of American
Folk Blues**
(Music Club)

When Will T. Massey was in town last year we spoke of the great troubadour tradition in music. It's a state to which he aspires and a category into which he places Dylan, Springsteen, Mellenkamp and of course, Guthrie. It's not only his hard hitting social commentaries and campaigning work that filtered down though, he was also a capable writer of children's songs and folksy 'nonsense'. There has been a gap in the UK catalogue with no 'Best Of Woody' being readily available until now; this well chosen 21 track collection taken from specially cleaned up masters fills it more than well. And at less than six quid too.

Steve Morris

CROSBY STILLS NASH AND YOUNG

4 Way Street
(Atlantic)

The combined voice of an entire generation at a time when Vietnam and the cold blooded murder of four students in Ohio, by American police firing upon a peaceful demonstration, were headline news. How little things have changed in twenty years. This double album contains some of the finest music, close harmony singing and social comment that ever there was. The seventies were a prime time for 'Supergroups' and experimentation. Melody ruled, sales of Rizlas soared and hairdressers went bankrupt. The sun shone every day and acid was cheap. Love, peace, bells and beads, Mark 2 Cortinas, Panda cars, student politics, Afghan coats, patchouli oil and Woodstock. They don't make adolescence like they used to.

John Slater

BILL MORRISSEY

Inside
(Philo via Topic Records)

'Inside' is the fourth album Morrissey (U.S. model) has cut for the Massachusetts based Philo label. Except for the traditional 'Hang Me, Oh Hang Me', the remainder of the dozen cuts here are self penned.

Produced by Mary Chapin Carpenter's bandleader John Jennings, Morrissey is assisted by a couple of other singer/songwriters, Suzanne Vega and Greg Brown.

As an observer and storyteller, on the evidence here, Morrissey can undoubtedly hold his own with the cream in the folk field. The title track focuses on the frustration of a romance where the initial fire had died down, while the drifter in 'Everybody Warned Me' perfectly captures the condition of his health with "Coughing up blood in a Motel 6/Thinking this time it's for real".

Lest you feel that this set is filled with doom and gloom, the joyful frolic that is 'Rite Of Spring' requires little explanation. Elsewhere, the biographical 'Robert Johnson' fleshes out the bluesman's legend, while Jennings' pitches in an appropriately bluesy break.

A troubadour at the peak of his powers. Observe, as this cult performer rises to deserved prominence in the folk field.

Arthur Wood

ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO

Gravity
(Watermelon Import, soon to be available via New Rose)

What we're talking about here, is blue blood pedigree. Generations of it. The Escovedo family is steeped in Rock Americana from the sixties and San Francisco, through to the eighties and Minneapolis. Based on the foregoing, it would have been something approaching a miracle, if Al had failed to find a niche in the recording industry.

Having stayed around long enough to appear on Rank & File's self titled, first cowpunk epic in 1982, Al went on to help found the

True Believers. An Al Escovedo solo album has been a long overdue necessity for some time. Cut as 1992 opened at Austin's Hit Shack, with Steve Bruton in the producers chair, 'Gravity' covers a wide spectrum of undiluted rhythms and genres, while lyrically remaining consistently true to Escovedo's ancestral vision of life. From the insistent beat chorus of the opening 'Paradise' through the rowdy 'Oxford' which I'll swear the Glimmer Twins would kill to have in their catalogue, Escovedo proves that he can sweep out the cobwebs with taste.

A strong contender for album of the year. Don't defy gravity, simply buy it.

Arthur Wood

THE ROCKINGBIRDS

The Rockingbirds
(Heavenly)

Apart from it being impossible to resist a band who record a track in tribute to Jonathan Richman ('Jonathan Jonathan'), this is a seriously excellent country rock album from a bunch of Londoners who have clearly spent many an hour listening to the likes of Gram and Johnny. On hearing the likes of 'Halfway To Comatose', 'Gradually Learning', 'Only One Flower' and John Hartford's 'In Tall Buildings', you'd well believe Camden Town was in Texas and the Burritos were flying again.

Mike Davies

PREFAB SPROUT

**The Best Of/A Life Of
Surprises**
(Columbia)

Sometimes it seems that melody drips from Paddy McAloon's fingers like honey from a warm spoon. The fact that he can marry a well turned lyric to the tunes is yet more cause to smile. That he has a band to deliver the goods in a unique setting is another strike for our hero. And if that fails to convince then Wendy Smiths filigree vocal foils will perform the final seduction.

Yes, this collection could convince any sceptic that Prefab Sprout are our finest pop combo. The real Prefab Four in fact.

Steve Morris



PREFAB SPROUT

T-BONE BURNETT

**The Criminal Under My
Own Hat**
(Columbia)

Noted producer and cult artist, this is Burnett's first album since 'The Talking Animals' back in 1987, but continues its often cynical perspective on mankind and personal relationships.

Burnett's Dylan influences hark back to the days of the Alpha Band and are undiminished here, be it on the opening love aftermath sourness of 'Over You', the 'All I Really Want To Do' remodel of 'Any Time At All'.

Musically, it's predominantly an acoustic blues core, ideally suited to Burnett's protest folk vocals, but there's plenty of additional tones to the palette, the speakeasy shuffle on 'It's Not Too Late' (a brink of the abyss warning), the Native American rhythms of 'Humans From Earth' (the ultimate new neighbour nightmare), the reggae underpinning of 'Criminals' (a sort of turn the mirror on yourself number), Appalachian roots on 'Kill Switch' (an 'I play for music not fame' number), or even Satanic Majesties psychedelia with 'I Can Explain Everything' (version two).

Burning on a slow fuse, frequently claustrophobic to match its lyrical mood ('Humans From Earth', 'Primitives'), it's not necessarily always comfortable listening, but it is immensely rewarding.

Mike Davies

SWELL

.... Well?
(Mean Recordings)

Swell continue the US onslaught of hard driven guitar noise-pop. It's slightly off kilter perspectives allows it to stand taller than the majority of it's colleagues in the field of guitar noise. It's interesting lyrically, and combined with the unmotivated dead-pan vocal delivery, (not unlike J. Mascis, but without the whine), at least it has something relevant and refreshing to offer an exceedingly jaded record buyer, disappointed at the pap delivered to us discreetly packaged as the 'next big thing'.

Mike Gayle

IN THE NURSERY

Duality
(Third Mind)

It's hard to get an angle on Sheffield's ITN. They're a synthetic, largely instrumental outfit that are most certainly not techno; then again they're certainly not new age. They seem to specialise in creating stirring soundtracks for marvellous movies that no-one has yet imagined.

The music is emotive, visual and elegant in turn and imbued with

the dignity that guarantees its longevity. This time round ITN have added a certain gravitas to their work with snatches of Richard Burton's sonorous dramatics though, miraculously, this adds to the texture and stimulus of the sound rather than tipping it into the mire of 'War Of The Worlds' sludge.

ITN are, it seems, busily creating a new English classicism. The fact that few are listening is something that you could change.

Steve Morris

VARIOUS

**Stax / Volt Live In
Europe Volume 3**
(Ace)

In 1967, the Stax/Volt Roadshow hit Europe and the cream of American soul brought sweat and blues to the continent in plane loads. Booker T. opened up with smooth but sassy instrumentals

'Green Onions' and 'Red Beans And Rice' followed by those towers of power The Mar-Keys with 'Philly Dog'.

Carla Thomas showed the world that her voice could match the best and 'B-A-B-Y' is as catchy now as then. Eddie Floyd's 'Knock On Wood' captures the attention but 'Raise Your Hand' is a soul destroyin' beat machine. To finish in true style, Otis Redding rip roars on stage and blasts all and sundry with 'Respect', 'Shake' and 'Day Tripper' before going all sentimental with 'My Girl' and 'Try A Little Tenderness'. Makes you realise just what the word soul really means!

Kevin Wilson

JERRY JEFF WALKER

**Hill Country Rain /
Gypsy Songman / Live
At Gruene Hall**
(all Ryko)

The establishment of Ryko's UK office is, at last, getting Walker's recent own label work into the domestic catalogue. The newest set is 'Hill Country Rain' which finds him pondering his advancing years but still determined to "hang out 'til they close the doors". It's a good album too, mellow for sure but that's Jerry Jeff's style, good-time honky tonk country, based on well written songs.

'Gypsy Songman' is Walker having a late 80s career reappraisal and revisiting his best songs including 'Mr Bojangles' and 'Driftin' Way Of Life'. It's a good primer and a recommended launch point for the curious.

'Live At Gruene Hall' is just that; JJW with a crack band providing a good night's entertainment in his natural habitat. Great stuff it is too, just a pity that a UK tour remains wishful thinking rather than a possibility. That ball's in your court JJ!

Steve Morris

LIVE REVIEWS

TOM RUSSELL & ANDREW HARDIN/TOM PACHECO The Junction Harborne

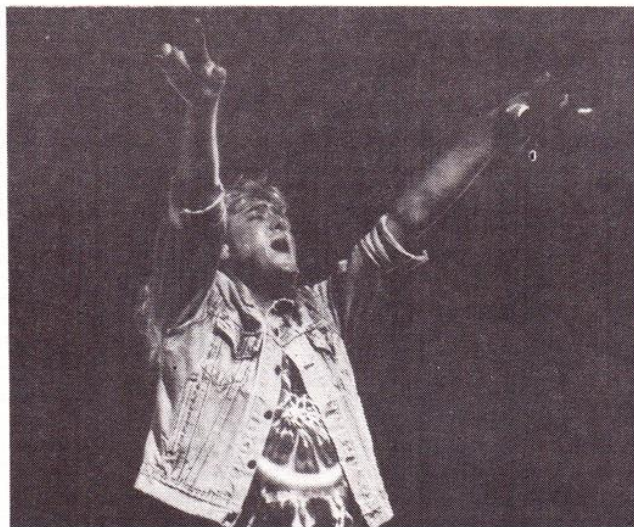
I can record that 'Angel of Lyon' co-written with Steve Young, stands as the first tune Tom Russell ever performed for a Birmingham audience. 'Navajo Rug' co-penned with Canadian Ian Tyson, was followed by 'Outbound Plane' co-penned with Texan Nanci Griffith; then it was over to Oslo and Tom's 'St. Olav's Gate', which Griffith covered back in 1986. The remaining songs in Russell's set, contained further real life scenes and character portraits, from the works of a modern day portrait painter in song. For his single song encore, Russell, who was ably supported throughout his set by tasteful guitar work from Andy Hardin, performed the winsome ballad 'Walking On The Moon'. Hunched over his guitar like a panther ready to pounce, Pacheco launched his half of the show with the anti-gun law anthem 'Made In America'. Never reticent about trying out new songs on an audience, through the evening Pacheco included 'The Soul', 'Tennessee Stars', 'George Bush Went To Rio' and 'A Princess Alone'. The latter pair of tunes possess a topicality, which I believe the passage of time would not look upon kindly. From this forthcoming album, Tom featured 'Long Gone', the tale of an invisible executioner, 'The Other Side Of Paradise' - about the narrator's death and rebirth, and 'Trust Your Heart Always' - which should be self explanatory. Pacheco returned to encore with one of his latest compositions, 'Grand Canyon', another truly fine Pacheco elegy about that eternal male/female gender conflict.

Arthur Wood

PICTURE THIS / RUBBER MALLET Synatra's Birmingham

The cupboard under my stairs would have offered more elbow room than Synatra's bar, one drum kit and the floor space was halved! Never-the-less, Picture This managed to pack in their faithful followers who came prepared for a good time and, in a show of non-partisan magnanimity, they loaned their support to Rubber Mallet too. The Mallets provided a set packed with blistering energy and excellent musicianship, obviously tightly rehearsed. Their drummer may look like Mickey Dolenz but he played like Steve Gadd, providing tight, crisp rhythms that set and pulled back the pace with awe-inspiring precision. A tiny venue like Synatra's, with the inadequate P.A. system that they had, did not do justice to the band who to be fair, compounded the problems by winding up their amps to the 'You must be joking' setting. No doubt a futile effort at pushing back the walls a few inches. Despite this though, they were great entertainment, as were the main men, Picture This. Fighting against all the odds, including a quick change and obviously unfamiliar equipment for guitarist Nigel Ratt, they managed a professional and workman-like set. With some imaginative tweaking they overcame the main inadequacy of the mushy acoustics and established their no-doubt well cultured rapport with the faithful, some of whom were up and moshing by the second song, shaking their dandruff into everybody's drinks! Apparently, the UK City of Music turned up their nose at Picture This (What greater accolade can there be?). Their songs, 'Wah, Folk Metal' according to their press blurb, range from the pedestrian to the inspired, all of them written with an admirable helping of tongue in cheek. There were a couple of really commercial tracks in there too, namely 'Man From The Ministry', 'Hopton Street' and 'Good-bye Rachel'. Well spent rehearsal time shone through the mushy P.A. with some great rhythm guitar from Dave Field and solid underpinning from the rest of the band. One of the highlights of the evening for me was the caustic 'Get Out Of My Face', just as cutting (for my money) as The Stones' classic. Shame there weren't any City Of Music big wigs there, it was dedicated to them.

Dave Massey



(Photo: Mark Hadley)

LEPPARD'S JOE ELLIOTT

DEF LEPPARD NEC Birmingham

The group whose history reads like a Shakespeare tragedy are back. Rick Allen and the band found a way to come back after losing an arm in a road accident, but then they suffered the death of guitarist Steve Clark. Bitter blows that give a chilling extra meaning to the words of 'Bringing On The Heartbreak'. Despite these traumas, Def Leppard's latest version of their 'In The Round' stage show has re-established them as one of the world's great rock bands. Musically, the new line-up seemed as good as ever, energetically working the circular arena as only they could. Technically, they also amazed the crowd. A suitably colourful light show was enhanced greatly by the awesome circular structures (too heavy for the previous tour at the NEC), that went on walkabout in a stunning War Of The Worlds style spectacle. 'Pour Some Sugar On Me', 'Animal' and 'Love Bites' evoked a magical quality, while the formula single 'Lets Get Rocked' worked a hell of a lot better as a live song, setting the arena alight. The gaps between albums make it even harder for Def Leppard to stay at the top of their tree, almost having to conquer a new generation by the time they manage to tour, but Britain's finest melodic rock band always proved equal to the task. Perhaps because of this, the fans appreciated the classics from 'Pyromania' and 'Hysteria' more than the new 'Adrenalize' material, but by the time they tour again, these too may be classics.

Andy Tipper

GARY MOORE/DAVE HOLE NEC Birmingham

What! No 'Out In The Fields'? No 'After The War'? Get with it, kid - Gazza's got the blues and he's got it bad, stretching it over the albums and unleashing it on the NECs and Hammy Odeons of an unsuspecting world. Tonight's set was sourced in 'Still Got The Blues' and this year's blue release 'After Hours'. Opening with the hit single 'Cold Day In Hell'. By the sound of things, it'll be a cool one, down there before Gary grows tired of Albert King et al. 'The Blues Is Alright' is as much a message to the rockers in the audience as it is a song-title; any doubting Thomases in the Thin Lizzy fan club should accept Mr Moore's new departure. It's not as if his six-string skills have been dulled or diminished. In fact it's quite the opposite. Fingers flying and face contorting through solo after emotive solo. Such breathtaking ability is what the NME might refer to as 'axe-wank', a phrase coined by jealous indie-heads who could never dream of getting such expression out of a musical instrument. Aply assisted by the nine-piece Midnight Blues Band, Moore was equally at ease with the foot-tappers ('Oh Pretty Woman', 'Walking By Myself') as he was with the slow, melody blues number like 'The Sky Is Crying' and 'Separate Ways'. The bulk of each song, slow or fast, was like foreplay to the main event. The Big Solo. Gary Moore may still have the blues but he's still a guitar hero all the same.

Support act, one Dave Hole, proved to be an interesting creature. After all, Australian blues players are about as common as Irish blues players and Hole's extraordinary slide technique makes him all the more unique. Then there's the comical facial expressions and the leaps around the stage. He's a bundle of energy with an abundance of talent that's obvious to all eyes and ears, even if he

was ever so slightly self-indulgent at times. Did the solos really need to be that long? Was all that howling and wailing (from the guitar) necessary? Well, maybe it was if 'virtuoso guitarist' is Dave's desired pigeon-hole. He certainly wasn't afraid to show off to a receptive crowd, even if none of his tricks were especially original. I mean, that Jimi what's-his-name showed us how to use our teeth and feet on the axe, and nearly every hero in the 'Who's Who' of guitarists gets down on his knees at some point. Far from static, Dave Hole is great entertainment, punishing the guitar and rewarding the listener. By the time he'd finished, my appetite was well and truly whetted.

Adam Bostock

ROD MACDONALD Spokes/Castle & Falcon Balsall Heath

Lest we at Brumbeat HQ retain any further doubts, the trio of organisers at Spokes would like it known that they are respectively Sam Cornwell, Martin Smith and Hilary Saunders. Keep up the good work folks. This city sorely lacks and desperately needs songwriter clubs like yours.

Opening what was in fact only his second UK date with 'Saving Grace' from his current album, 'Highway To Nowhere', MacDonald peppered his ten song first set with numerous, as yet unrecorded tunes. Of those, the spectrum of living in that great society across the ample Atlantean pond comes under the microscope in 'One Thing I Like About America', while 'Eyes Wide Open' and 'Open Up Your World To Me' are odes to matters of the heart. Teaming up with Messrs Smith and Cornwell, Rod kicked off his second set with a couple of extended blues numbers which gave each member of the trio an opportunity to run through solo instrumental spots. Then it was back to his own compositions. The narrator in 'Coming Of The Snow' describes a visit to his hometown and the memories retained of a love he once left there. An atmospheric song enhanced by a neat harmonica figure from Martin Smith. Since he was stood on English soil, and not that far from the home of The Bard, MacDonald closed with an acappella rendition of Martin Carthy's witty 'Hamlet In Three Verses', a fitting way to close out in the circumstances.

Arthur Wood

SEX GANG CHILDREN Barrel Organ Birmingham

I went along tonight mainly to see me ol' mate, Andi Sex Gang, who helped Ausgang out many moons ago. Of Course, I was also intrigued to see and hear the band after all this time, if only for nostalgia's sake. I'd always admired the band's music for it's inventiveness and time changes that veered sharply away from the regular 4/4 beat, but I'd never found myself wholly embracing them. SGC reformed when bassist Dave Roberts was helping out on one of Andi's solo projects. They found themselves working well together again and so Dave ditched his splinter group, The Children, they roped in a new guitarist and drummer and hit the road. Sadly, it seems Britain may lose them, as they seem to be more warmly welcomed in the States, where the newly formed Cleopatra label have signed them up. Yet tonight, a fine mixture of old and new Goths (I hate that word!) turned up to chicken dance and throw their hands to the heavens. This was a warm-up gig before their 5 week stint in America, mainly

for the benefit of their guitarist, who was understandably nervous. But Conrad from NMA joined in tonight to make him feel more at home. The new rockier material is good and punchy, but to be honest, it seemed at odds with Andi's twisted, decadent vocal style. This is highlighted even more by the rest of the band looking like they belong in a regular rock 'n' roll outfit, whilst Andi looked like a rabid children's clown on speed. It wasn't till they dragged out oldies like 'Sebastian', 'Les Amants D'Un Jour' and the truly atmospheric, yet so simplistic 'Dieche', that post-punk shiver crawled down my spine.

A bit pricey to get in, but well worth seeing a few old, familiar faces and stand around for an hour in a veritable time warp, listening to music that I feel sure would've gone down well in some of the stranger clubs in 1920's Berlin. I had a bit of sunken-cheeked fun.

Max-x

'DEMISE OF THE EXECUTIVE PERAMBULATOR' SHOWCASE The Old Rep Birmingham

I used to think indie music, in whatever shape or form it took, was just a load of over-hyped bollocks. And after sitting through this night of 'indie heaven', I still can't tell the difference between the Catapult Clubbers who grace the Hare and Hounds once a week and the name bands who shift thousands of albums and T-shirts to masses of shoe-gazing students. Maybe that should be taken as a compliment by the Wonder Stuff/Levellers/Inspirals - type wannabes showcased tonight in support of the 'Demise of the Executive Perambulator' compilation LP. I was genuinely impressed by the likes of Pietra Rosa who kicked off the evening with a competent set. The infectious groove of 'Round and Round' is still with me, giving my prejudiced inner ear a good kicking. Next up were Rubery's greatest export, The Sordid Details. With two Rush fans in the band and a keyboard player supposedly influenced by Rick Wakeman (trivia source: their amusing bio), I was ready to like T.S.D. I wasn't disappointed, even the overall sound was er... Stuffy?

Bands like The Day and 'headliners', Pink Dandelions will inevitably attract comparisons with The Levellers if they sail a folk boat on the indie sea - not that this is a fault. With acoustic guitar, fiddle and clarinet (or was it an oboe?) at their disposal, The Day certainly added a dash of variety to the proceedings. Their footman deserves the Brum Beat bravery award for battling through the set with flu still clinging to his shirt tails.

The penultimate slot was filled by Dog Food, who fall into the "What the f***?" category. This jolly five piece raised a few smiles with some quirky pop songs (e.g. 'Plastic Moon', 'I've Got A Brand New Bike'), that make They Might Be Giants seem half-serious. The frontman parped away on his keyboard whilst doing his best, in terms of stage presence, to be Buster Bloodvessel, Doc Cox and Vic Reeves all at the same time. Great band for a stag-night piss-up.

The Pink Dandelions, meanwhile, can afford to take themselves much more seriously as a foursome full of talent. Opening with an instrumental, the PDs set climaxed with 'Strawberry Girl', a swirling slice of psychedelic-folk built upon a haunting intro from the band's shit-hot fiddle player. If these local heroes can capture the energy of their live shows on plastic, I'll be watching this space with interest.

Adam Bostock

FLEADH '92 Finsbury Park London

That quaint old custom of standing in discarded takeaways is with us again. Festival time!

The third annual celebration of Irish (and at times, loosely related) music took place on what remained of Finsbury Park. The usual festival tradition of missing all the decent acts was hindered by a schedule that ran to time.

The most tedious way to review such an event is to simply rate the acts, so to prove that theory, poor sound hampered a disappointing Saw Doctors and Suzanne Vega seemed out of place. Andrew Strong (from 'The Commitments') delivered an impressive soul set and The Stunning proved themselves worthy of further investigation.

The highlights? Christy Moore and Mary Coughlan - obviously, a superb traditional set from Sharon Shannon and the confused Green On Red ("Does anyone know why we're playing an Irish festival? Capacity for alcohol?" mused Dan Stuart) whose squad members this time featured J.D. Foster and Jools Holland's kid brother.

As always a curate's egg, but only the terminally blinkered would have come away dissatisfied. Scrape the congealed chow mein from my soles, I feel Cambridge coming on.

Neil Richards