

BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

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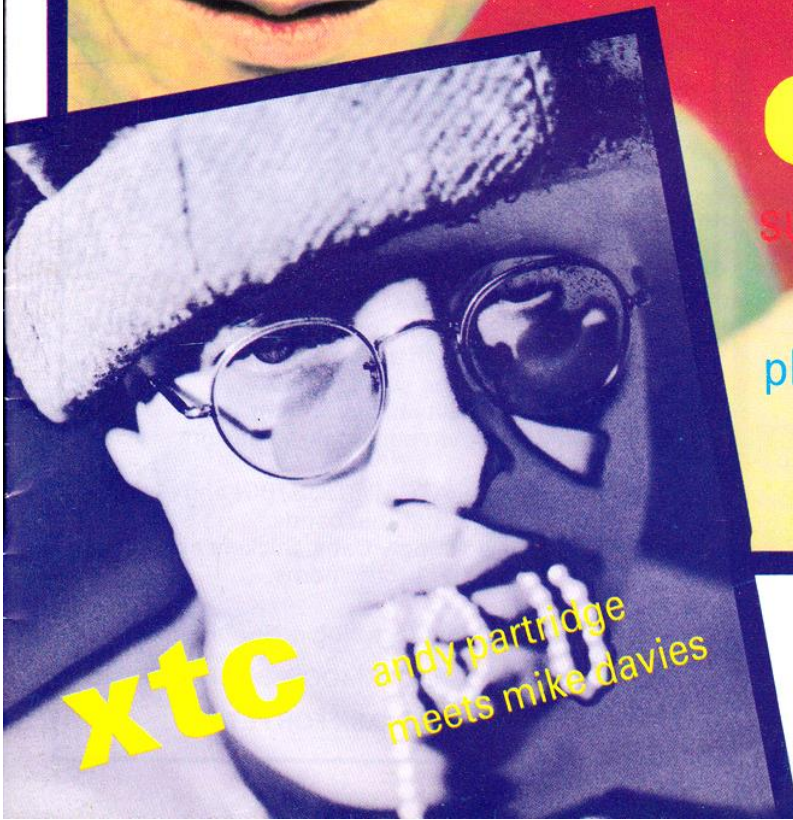
carter

summer of the love album

plus: shoot the moon

delta

davies: demos and more



xtc

andy partridge
meets mike davies

Donovan Leitch emerges once more. This time it's the 'Hurdy Gurdy UK Tour' which visits Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday 17th May. One week earlier, Stockton's Wing are at the same venue. Opening the monthly account at the Town Hall, is my very favourite Campfire folkie from the Quiet Valley Ranch, Michelle Johnson. Sorry, Michelle Shocked. With album numero four, 'Arkansas Traveller' already on the racks, it's time to tread those 'boreds' once more.

Fresh from his late April set at the Digbeth Irish Centre, Paul Brady appears once again with his acoustic songs n' jokes n' stories show at Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall on Thursday 21st. The Oyster Band also make it a duo of local dates, with a Civic Hall appearance on Friday 29th.

To be honest, I've long retained doubts about the genuine nature of k.d. lang discovering her Patsy Cline niche back in 1989 with 'Shadowlands'. And that's despite the fact of having a road band called the Reclines. From way back, as well. (There's a pic of Patsy on the sleeve of her 1984

ARTHUR WOOD

album. langophile Ed.). Cynicism led me to believe that the cowpunk rhythms of earlier efforts 'A Truly Western Experience' (Bumstead) and 'Angel With A Lariat' (Sire) just weren't cutting the financial mustard. Trouble is, her subsequent efforts leading up to the recently issued 'Ingenu' (Sire) are sucking this writer into a black hole of total belief. The opportunity to check out the lang's chops, comes on Tuesday 5th May with her Symphony Hall gig. As if you haven't already noticed, it's Summer Festival time again. The 16th Edale Bluegrass Festival takes place at Nether Ollerton Farm, Edale, Derbyshire from Thursday 28th through to Sunday 31st May. Headlining this year's bill is Allison Krauss and Union Station. This Illinois

born wunderkind, has taken the bluegrass field by storm in the last couple of years, reaping numerous awards including a Grammy along the way. On the evening of Thursday 28th, there's a special show featuring Nashville based fiddle genius, Mark O' Conner. For further details, contact Tom Travis on 061 236 3326 (day) 0457 861789 (night). Upton Upon Severn Folk Festival is held on May 1st through 4th. For details contact 28 Minge Lane, Upton Upon Severn, Worcester. Tel. 0684 63849 or 593663. For details of the May 15th to 17th Shipston Folk Weekend, contact Home Farm, Admington, Shipston-on-Stour, Warks. Tel. 0789 450250.

Here's one for the couch potato concert fan. Armed merely with a television set, in the privacy of your own abode,

you can witness the recent 25th Annual Country Music Association Awards Show on Monday 4th May at 7pm, Channel 4. Among the countless artists featured are Garth Brooks, The Judds, Vince Gill, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Albert Lee, George Strait, Trisha Yearwood, Marty Stuart, the Kentucky Headhunters and....wait for it Roy Rogers. You have been forearmed!

Billed as 'The Last Word' Farewell Tour with an eleven track, Special Delivery label album of the same name already in the stores, Clive Gregson & Christine Collister are scheduled for a couple of local dates. The first on Wednesday 13th May is at Wolverhampton Wulfrun Hall, while they're featured in the more intimate surroundings of the Red Lion Folk Club, in Kings Heath on Saturday 23rd. Christine is embarking on a solo career, while Clive will continue working as a session musician, producer and of course, songwriter.

The Hibernian roots deeper into the crossover ether during the coming month. Freddie White appears on Friday 6th, with world musician Ali Has-

san Kaba (from Egypt) there on the following evening. The Davy Spillane Band's rescheduled date from March, is now confirmed for Saturday 9th May. At the same venue on Wednesday 13th it's Mike Silver, while on Saturday 16th it's those Sons Of The Desert. The following night sees the much lauded Oyster Band perform some cuts from their new Cooking Vinyl offering 'Deserters'.

Local Club dates for the month of May:- Fri 1st: Simon Thumire (Woodman, Kingswinford), Singers Night (Old Market Tavern, Moseley St.); Sat 2nd: Harvey Andrews (Red Lion, Kings Heath); Fri 8th: Chris Foster (Woodman), Jim Couza (Market Tavern); Sat 9th: Maddy Prior & Rick Kemp (Red Lion); Fri 15th: Huw & Tony Williams (Woodman), Singers Night (Market Tavern); Sat 16th: Vin Garbutt (Red Lion); Fri 22nd: Singers Night (Woodman); T.B.C. (Market Tavern); Sat 23rd: Clive Gregson & Christine Collister (Red Lion); Fri 29th: Norman & Betty McDonald (Woodman), Singers Night (Market Tavern); Sat 30th: Alias Ron Kavana (Red Lion).

SILVER SURFIN'

The major reissue this month is Connoisseur Collection's '25 Years Of Rock N' Roll Volume 2'. So far five volumes spanning '59 to '63 have appeared containing one hundred cuts.

Now Brum Beat readers catching the series' subtitle, 'Radio One's Simon Bates Golden Hour Presents', might run for the hills but fear not; a) the series coincides with the station's quarter century so it's simply a sensible marketing ploy and b) it's my guess that Connoisseur's Mark Stratford has wielded editorial control rather than the loathsome Bates. This is the Collection's second massive look at R'n'R's silver years so the obvious choices have already gone, and the company is sensibly priding itself on a no duplication policy. It would be facile to cherry pick either high (or low) spots here; suffice it to say that if you're starting a pop collection on CD and want a representative back catalogue that won't break the bank, this is the ideal foundation.

Carole King's sixth solo set, 'Wrap Around Joy' reappears care of Thunderbolt / Magnum and whilst no 'Tapestry' it's classy mid seventies LA style AOR demonstrates how wide of the mark this year's model, baffling Bev Craven, really is. Magnum also have 'All The Best' from Rick Nelson. It's a re-recording of his career best from 'Stood Up' to 'Garden Party' and whilst hardly recommendable when the true originals are in the racks, the

performances are so relaxed and assured, they do no harm at all to the Nelson legacy.

Ace Records are also bayou bound with a twenty-five track 'Swallow Louisiana Cajun Special Vol 2'. With legends like Nathan Abshire, The Balfa Brothers and Belton Richard marinating the lesser known (but red hot) contributors it's a great month for gumbo guzzlers.

King Pleasure And The Biscuit Boys / Big Town Playboys fans should note that Ace have dug deep into the Speciality vault to make shiny Joe Houston's 'Cornbread And Cabbage Greens' (featuring long time KP stage fave 'All Night Long') and Chuck Higgins 'Pachuko Hop'.

Music Club receive the wooden spoon of the month for 'Orchestral Rock II' in which The Vienna Symphonic Orchestra do damage to the likes of 'Stairway To Heaven' and a Queen Medley on a scale that makes the Tories attack on the NHS seem trifling. The label regains ground with an excellent 'Kings Of Cajun' set that offers 22 great 'stomps from the swamps', performed by genuine giants of the genre, for about six quid. The Clubbers have also squashed onto one disc all aural necessities by Marilyn Monroe. They've called it, 'The Essential Recordings' and clothed it in an impressive booklet of pics and biog. With the seventies vying for fashion acceptance Music Club's 'Get On Up - 16 Saturday Night Stompers' should be on your pose purchase list. All you need from Village People, Grandmaster Flash, Trammmps, Sharon Redd, Bohannon and more, more, more!

GREGSON & COLLISTER THE LAST WORD



'THE LAST WORD' FAREWELL TOUR MAY 1992

| | | | |
|----|----------------|--|--------------|
| 2 | STOKE ON TRENT | Bridge Street Arts Centre | 0782 717600 |
| 3 | LINCOLN | Lawn Centre | 0522 523000 |
| 4 | COLCHESTER | Arts Centre | 0206 577301 |
| 5 | BRENTWOOD | Hermit Centre | 0277 218897 |
| 8 | NORWICH | Arts Centre | 0603 660352 |
| 9 | HOUNSLOW | Centre Space | 081 577 6969 |
| 10 | HITCHIN | Sun Inn | 0462 672893 |
| 11 | SOUTHAMPTON | The Gantry | 0703 229319 |
| 12 | BRISTOL | The Thekla | 0272 293301 |
| 13 | WOLVERHAMPTON | Wulfrun Hall | 0902 312030 |
| 16 | KENDAL | Brewery Arts Centre | 0539 725133 |
| 17 | NEWCASTLE | Playhouse | 091 232 7079 |
| 18 | BURNLEY | Mechanics Arts Centre | 0282 30055 |
| 20 | LEEDS | Irish Centre | 0532 480887 |
| 21 | SHEFFIELD | Brincliffe Oaks Hotel | 0742 349636 |
| 22 | SPALDING | Eloee Hall | 0775 725031 |
| 23 | BIRMINGHAM | Red Lion Club | 021 444 7258 |
| 24 | NOTTINGHAM | Woolaton Park Pavilion | 0602 419741 |
| 26 | LONDON | Queen Elizabeth Hall | 071 928 8800 |
| 27 | EXETER | Barnfield Theatre | 0392 421111 |
| 28 | CHELtenham | Town Hall Pillar Room | 0242 523690 |
| 30 | MANCHESTER | Lesser Free Trade Hall (5.30 pm & 8.30 pm) | 061 236 7110 |

NEW ALBUM 'THE LAST WORD' RELEASED APRIL 20TH
ON SPECIAL DELIVERY RECORDS (SPDCD 1045/ SPDCD1045)
DISTRIBUTED BY REVOLVER/PINNACLE

"The state of the art" (Rolling Stone)

Special Delivery



MEGASTORE

RECORDEDdelivery

98 CORPORATION STREET, BIRMINGHAM

HUGH AND KATY MOFFATT

Dance Me Outside

(Rounder/Philo via Topic Records)

This eleven track duet album is long overdue in my book, considering their stunning interpretation of Hugh's 'Jack and Lucy' from five years back. Co-produced by Hugh and Katy with Emmylou Harris / Rodney Crowell associate Donivan Cowart at the controls of the Enactron Truck, it falls mainly within an acoustic setting. Our own Albert Lee pitches in some neat guitar licks, while Buddy Emmons' steel and dobro balances well with Tim O'Brien's refined mandolin breaks.

The album kicks off with Tom Kell's 'It's Been Decided' and closes with the Chip Moman/Dan Penn classic 'Dark End Of The Street'. Elsewhere the duo reprise 'We'll Sweep Out The Ashes (In The Morning)'; cut nearly two decades ago by Emmylou and Gram Parsons. Hugh supplies four new tunes, while three of Katy's collaborations are featured, including the album title track written with Tom Russell.

'Dance Me Outside' is a fine low key set which amply displays Hugh's talent as a writer and performer, while that heart rending ache in Katy's voice does it every time for me. That the lady can pen a neat song was never in doubt.

Arthur Wood

LEON RUSSELL

Anything Can Happen

(Virgin America)

A couple of decades back Russell wielded some large influence. Coming from the southern states scene his musical ringmastering of the Joe Cocker / Mad Dogs tour set him up as a man of legend and ability.

This album finds the man of influence returning courtesy of Bruce Hornsby, one of the influenced. Sadly this is not one of the great comebacks. Russell sounds for much of the time like a sideman on his own record. For instance on 'Stranded On Easy Street' his trademark gospel / R&B piano ripples recognisably but the song is weak and the band sound uncommitted. There's just no grit.

Equally Russell's hallmark gnarled vocals sound uncomfortable fronting a lacklustre band instead of being invigorated by hard playing.

Sadly playing this back to back with 'Delta Lady' from way back when, is no contest. As a comeback this is a totally misjudged false start.

Steve Morris

CHRISTINE ALBERT

Texafraunce

(Gambini Global / Import)

Austin's leading songbirds have been musically surveying their ancestral roots of late. Last year San Antonio raised chanteuse Tish Hinojosa, looked southward with 'Aquella Noche'. This year Christine Albert takes to the wing, westward across the Atlantic, to present us with the eleven stunning cuts that compose 'Texafraunce'.

Born in Upstate New York of a Swiss/French mother, Albert received her adolescent schooling in New Mexico and finally settled in the musically fertile haven of Austin, Texas a decade back. Aided in this bilingual project by the cream of Austin's acoustic pickers and strummers etc, producer Mitch Watkins has intelligently employed the colours at his disposal. Albert's voice however is the jewel in this particular crown.

Whether as the writer of original songs, 'La Lumiere De L'Amour' and 'Je Reve De Toi' or in interpreting angst filled Piaf classics 'La Vie En Rose' and 'Hymne A L'Amour' Albert's voice soars and glides with ease. Elsewhere Bob Seger, Jane Gillman, plus George & Ira Gershwin tunes, experience the 'Texafraunce' treatment.

With '92 being a significantly Euro-oriented year, 'Texafraunce' is a fitting musical contribution. Lest your native island bound isolationism prevents you from contemplating this disc, Albert neatly mingles Anglais/Francais throughout the set!

(Available from Gambini Global, PO Box 49207, Austin, Texas 78765. CD \$11.00 and cassette \$7.50 each.)

Arthur Wood

VARIOUS / OST

The Commitments Vol. 2

(MCA)

Time to capitalise on the left overs. A few that made the film, but luckily not the original album, padded out with sweepings from the editing room floor to a generous thirty six minutes! Well it's not that bad (short playing time aside) though admittedly proceedings do flag when Andrew Strong takes a breather. Robert Arkins is no match as a bloodless 'Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)' amply illustrates. A fact that is surprising as his duet with Angeline Ball on 'Bring It On Home To Me' is above par.

It is not as essential as Vol. 1; for the committed only you might say.

Steve Morris

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Threadgill's Supper Session

(Buddy Records - import cassette only)

Neat title, huh? Just proves that there's still a few folk stalking this planet, who possess sixties sensibilities.

OK, let's get the history lesson over with. Back in 1933, the late Kenneth Threadgill, old time country singer and yodeller extraordinaire, opened a bar in an abandoned North Austin filling station. Over the ensuing decades the bar became a legendary stop over for musicians. These days, on the same site you'll find Threadgill's Restaurant.

With Jimmie Dale Gilmore regularly at the helm, Wednesday night 'Sittin'n'Singin' For Supper' sessions became a tradition at the eatery; until early last year when JD handed in his badge. Sometime sideman Champ Hood, was the chosen replacement.

This 'Supper' live tape recorded last September (and hopefully the first of many), features contributions from the new and old hosts, plus Marcia Ball, Christine Albert, Sarah Elizabeth Campbell and the unique Butch Hancock. They're aided throughout this sixty minute plus set by an A-Team of local pickers. Tradition dictates that the set kicks off with Jimmie Rodgers 'Waitin For A Train' and closes with 'Sittin' On Top Of The World'. In between, there's a ton of tunes, traditional and new, loads of atmosphere and some damned fine pickin'n'grinnin'. It's also your best chance to hear the Threadgill's remix of Hancock's 'Bluebird'.

Come to think of it, this compilation deserves a UK release via an outlet such as Demon. Over to U

... Essential for any self respecting Texophile it's £7.50 a copy, from Buddy Records, 1121-B Bluebonnet Lane, Austin, Texas 78704.

Arthur Wood

BIGGIE TEMBO

Out Of Africa

(Cooking Vinyl)

Ex-Bhundu Boys front man Biggie emerges with an album that takes traditional Zimbabwean melodies and transposes them into vibrant African dance cuts, notably 'Mozambique' - a song that damns South African interventionism whilst curling up the toes and causing hips to sway! The Bhundu Boys were late 80's mega cult hits, Biggie looks like being a mid-90's cultural rave star!

Kevin Wilson

MARY COUGHLAN

Sentimental Killer

(eastwest)

Not big on surprises, while rather patchy this is exactly what you'd expect from a Coughlan album. Smokey jazz-blues and stylistic nods to Brel and Brecht (notably 'There Is A Bed' and 'Love In The Shadows') with bitter romantic songs of stained sheets, bruised hearts, death and drink. On some she simply tries too hard and demolishes the song, Cohen's 'Aint No Cure For Love' is belaboured and overblown, and her version of 'Handbags & Gladrags' is a pale shadow of Chris Farlowe's. On the other hand she works wonders with Jim Webb's Four Tops hit 'Do What You Gotta Do' (oddly credited on the cassette as 'Ballad of A Sad Young Man'). Equally positively, the roots-gospel and Catholic imagery of 'Magdalen's Laundry' is a stunner, she does a perfect Piaf waltz through 'Hearts', and the playful 'Just a Friend of Mine' is a wonderful Eartha Kitt skittish jazz. Not a great album but one of the few where you can genuinely taste the nicotine and smell the whiskey on the breath.

Mike Davies

THE REVEREND BROWN AND THE EARLY BIRDS

Well Bless My Soul!

(Boshay Music / Mail Order)

It would be easy to dismiss this self produced sixteen track set on the basis that the vocals are a bit one dimensional, that the rhythm section can be a tad ponderous and that the material, all self penned, is derivative and thematically samey.

But that would be ignoring two major facts; this is a blues set and in the blues all of those considerations mean diddley if there ain't the 'feel'. And this has the 'feel'.

The Rev's voice may not be the best but its whisky and untipped texture is convincing, and his guitar mauling is just dandy. His six string sermons wail and coax, scream and plead with a raw untamed edge. He may be a little undisciplined in places but hell, how are you gonna train the 'feel'?

No, the Rev and his altar boys deliver the real thing. If Gary Moore's current brand leading albums are to your taste you owe it to yourself to seek this out with some vigour. It'll be like quaffing scrumpy after Autumn Gold but to paraphrase Dylan, if you start on Burgundy you soon need the harder stuff.

Steve Morris

GREGSON & COLLISTER

The Last Word

(Special Delivery)

And so it's farewell album and tour time eh? Well, I suppose Clive And Christine were never going to replace Everything But The Girl in bedsit affections. They're far too bluff. Down to earth. Imagine Mr Gregson discussing the philosopher of the week or cultivating a goatee for hip cred (as discovered on a Blue Note album sleeve).

Trouble is their records were, by and large, like them; plain folk that took some time to make friends with, honest individuals you could rely on. Special in their quiet ways.

'The Last Word' is just that. It doesn't break the mould and ensures that, sadly, their passing will be largely unmarked.

Steve Morris

THE STARGAZERS

Back In Orbit

(Ace)

Now this is a band I have long admired. Not a genre of music I normally go ape about but their cover of Bill Haley's Hit 'Crazy Man Crazy' is pure jive Daddy-O! With a smattering of band originals, 'Baby, Baby, Baby' being my favourite. Buy the album, get the D.A. greased and Hail, Hail, Rock 'n' Roll!

Fancy Wootton

JOE COCKER

Night Calls

(Capitol)

That's all he's ever needed. A set of solidly suitable songs, a collection of sympathetic producers and a manager who can deliver.

This sees all of those factors in place. OK, so the sound may veer to AOR in places but Cocker's amazing voice refuses to be smoothed. The grit and soul are still the driving force. Cocker's passion is the real thing, not the ersatz Michael Bolton soft focus mallarky. Cocker's pain is too real; blues based on personal anguish that runs deeper than a cancelled Beverly Hills hair appointment.

Yet he applies that feel to commercial songs from Elton John, Prince, Don Dixon, Bryan Adams and, with a hint to the early success perhaps, Lennon / McCartney. All in all, a devastating combination that adds up to one thing: The Joe Cocker revival starts here. The man is going to be massive; and quite right too.

Steve Morris



TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS NEC Birmingham

In my book, Petty's right hand axeman, Mike Campbell, is a largely unsung guitar hero. Anyone stumbling into this NEC date would have quickly understood the reasons why. The drawback, and there always has to be one, is that an assessment of his string pyrotechnics needed to be balanced with an incessant, night long, series of guitar changes. On a fashion note - hollow bodied acoustics followed single neck solids, double neck specials and the inevitable jangly Rickenbacker. The axe count easily surpassed one dozen. More damned changes of rig, than Selina's Clothes Show.

Launching into the great wide open with the title cut from last year's Heartbreakers comeback album, Petty followed with two more from the same source. Strutting the stage like a manic, albino panther; kicking up his heels to almost universal response from the faithful, Petty indulged in non-harmful self parody for most of the evening. His antics inevitably leading into a series of crowd rousing, hand clapping, singalong-a-Tommy sessions. The boys were there to entertain. Taking hostages wasn't part of their plan.

Midset, drummer Stan Lynch's lead vocal on the 1966 Count Five hit 'Psychotic Reaction' was followed by 'Ben's Boogie', Mr Tench's keyboard workout. Deja View. Seems like someone had hit the video replay button. Was this the concert of the video? As the stage lights dimmed to black, the Spielberg influence crept in, Petty exhumed his familiar pork pie hat from the white light streaming out of a pirate's treasure chest, stage right. 'You Get Me High', a newbie, followed. Roger McGuinn's 'The Ballad Of Easy Rider' was even given an airing, before Petty indulged in a short acoustic set, including the unrecorded tune 'Driving Down To Georgia'.

After opening the three song encore with 'Learning To Fly', Petty introduced the band including sixth man in the shadows, Scott Thurston (guitar). Minutes later the lights dimmed for the final time, and they were gone.

Arthur Wood

DAISY CHAINSAW/ SHEEP ON DRUGS/ ELEPHANT WITCH Wulfrun Hall Wolverhampton

How the hell do you write a review on a gig featuring three bands, the first of which didn't play but distributed bananas, included a typing demonstration (the result of which were subsequently eaten by the typist) and centred around the physical abuse of a blind-folded female member of their company; the second of which featured a nutter with a designer nose-bleed, guitar and drum machine, and a vocalist with a gun projecting from his skull; and the third featuring the bedraggled frame of Daisy Chainsaw, fresh from her mudbath and with more than a hint of lunacy. Having endured 'Sleep on Drugs' and 'Elephant Witch' I was actually making a

retreat when, unannounced, Daisy Chainsaw appeared on stage and half the audience reappeared from the bar. Not my cup of tea perhaps but Daisy's performance at least held my attention for the rest of her short set, visually and photographically if not necessarily musically. There was considerably more than a slight spark of commercial promise in her material and imagery. The gig attracted around four times the attendance of the rave in the Civic Hall next door, largely based on their first single 'Love Your Money', and I suspect further tours, hopefully better publicised, may take the band onto greater things.

Mark Hadley

OZZY OSBORNE Appollo Manchester

In today's age of thrash metal and excessive aural aggression Ozzy, once hailed as the wild man of rock, may seem a little tame. Yet his musicality, humour, and on-stage presence are unsurpassed. His Appollo appearance, the first of three to precede his forthcoming Arena dates scheduled for later this year, simply reinforced these observations.

Following a brief video history of Ozzy's more bizarre publicity the band launched into an unrelenting barrage of rock anthems and the obligatory buckets of water, the sparse stage set enabling Ozzy and guitarist Zakk Wilde to strut their stuff without obstruction (and without getting the gear wet).

Ozzy's performance was quite simply awesome and ideally complemented by the excellent Zakk Wilde whose fretboard antics have become as individual and expressive as his predecessors. Ozzy is due to play Birmingham's NEC later this year. Check him out.

Mark Hadley

DOODLEBUG / BLIPVERT Hummingbird Birmingham

Blipvert are a colourful amalgam, skate punks on funk. You can tell that they worship the Chili Peppers and in fact they can probably play their whole catalogue backwards and twice as well. This doesn't make them a great band though. They still lack two vital ingredients in their evil brew, a sense of purpose and the ability to let their own characters shine through.

We all know how Alan McGee discovered Swervedriver whilst cruising around the US of A with a pile of demos and something makes me think that this is how Doodlebug should be heard. Road music from the garage. They even went as far as borrowing Prince's 'Little Red Corvette' to hold me to their ideals. Their own material still has a certain charm, 'Cactus' being as spiky as it suggests and 'Do What You Wanna' do throws out hooks left right and centre. I left dreaming of long sun baked Arizona dirt tracks, walked into the rain and the image was almost washed away.

David Ellyatt

THE PINK DANDELIONS/ ROOSTERVELT The Catapult Club Hare and Hounds King's Heath

With a substantial and enthusiastic crowd turning out to the atmospherically revitalised Hare and Hounds (lights and backdrop!) it appears that The Pink Dandelions, despite a rash of recent local gigs, are attracting a regular following

other bands would kill for.

First, however, a word about the marvellous Roostervelt. Defiantly un-hip, they deliver a set varying from beautiful Crosby, Stills and Nash type harmonising, to paint stripping feedback, all with an ear for a timeless classic song.

The Pink Dandelions, complete with hyperactive fiddle player combine youthful exuberance with a confidence and togetherness which belies their tender years. Modern day Wonder Stuff without the cynicism, or Waterboys minus the mystical Celtic bullshit come to mind - all melted down to an exhilarating foot-stomping hoedown. Brought to the attention of the right ears (oh for a fair world!), larger stages surely will be in sight.

Neil Tansley

29 PALMS/ENERGY ORCHARD Wulfrun Hall Wolverhampton

29 Palms are one of those bands who are invigorating to come across especially these days. Their songs are both memorable and refreshing and their live show is genuine, welcoming and modestly anthemic. 'Mad To Be Saved' the opener, is a very melodious and uplifting song with soaring and committed vocals from Simon Wilson.

As their set unfolded, it not only showed their skills in songwriting, but also a great outdoors feeling that breathes through many of their songs. This was illustrated no better than by 'Go Not Gently' with it's Bruce Hornsby - like piano and the fact that it's chorus has remained permanently in my head.

Energy Orchard are so un-assuming, they just get on stage and play tunes that are down to earth, spirited and performed with passionate hearts.

Spartacus

RANDY CRAWFORD/ FAST FREDDIE'S FINGERTIPS Symphony Hall Birmingham

A capacity crowd sat, watched and politely applauded a band that worked and worked - Fast Freddie's band suffered from an audience that hadn't had time for a drink (well, if the impolite and short-handed bar-staff had tried harder, they might have). This eight piece band need an all dancin', all stompin' crowd. Next time they are in town at the right venue, a Good Time will be had by all. Ms. Crawford was on top form. Her set contained all her hits, performed with the excellence you would come to expect from an artiste of her calibre.

Fancy Wootton

BRUM BEAT — 19

JOHN CAMPBELL Irish Centre Birmingham

Despite the poor audience, this was a gig to remember - one to tell the grandkids about. John Campbell and his band set out to confirm the rave reviews of last year. Stalking the stage, his menacing appearance, bowels of the earth vocal and sweet stinging bottleneck playing was the nearest thing to heavenly comfort you could get. Featuring most of his current 'One Believer' album material and a smattering of new songs, the standing ovation after the encores was so richly deserved. Using his close to 60 year old National (that once belonged to Lightnin' Hopkins and Dr. John), the depths of emotions were tempted and wrung out dry.

The show had been opened by local band Straight Aces, with their newly added horn section. This is a blues band that draws on the vast quantity of numbers available without relying on the 'usual' material you expect to hear from British bands. One final praiseworthy note must go to their lead player John Purcell. He just plays..... and how.

Ian Green

PIETRA ROSA Cleopatras Wolverhampton

Having recently played support to the likes of Kingmaker (who were at the gig!), Pele and Gallon Drunk, selling t-shirts on a par with Neds and James in the town and being followed by their 'Sherry Crew', Pietra Rosa are making waves.

In Stuart, they have a visual and committed frontman who convincingly communicates the songs to the audience. Many of their songs are dynamic and played in a furious spirit, regularly breaking out all shapes. What gives them the edge over other bands in this field, is that there is time spent in songwriting, resulting in some appetising hooks, individual emphasis and a distinctive identity.

Much of Pietra Rosa's appeal directs itself towards those who have relentless amounts of energy to release.... whether it be in anger or celebration ('Party Head') or in more serious subject matter ('Wars R Us').

Involvement and movement are of the essence here, riding, bursting, revolving and concentrated upon their activities and displayed through 'Round And Round' 'Jesus' and the closing 'Death Before Disco'.

Search and enjoy....manifest yourself.

Spartacus