

BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

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Sweet Jesus

NEW POP SAVIOURS?

MIKE DAVIES IS AT THE BIRTH



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ARTHUR WOOD

In Birmingham we've had Nanci at The Irish Centre. The Hummingbird and The Town Hall. This time around **Ms Griffith** is bound for glory at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on Thursday December 5th. Her ninth and most recent album, 'Late Night Grand Hotel', is the first to be cut outside the States. Tanita Tikaram knob twiddlers Argent and Van-Hook being the parties charged with safeguarding the production values. Relative to 'Storms', her 1989 album for MCA, 'Late Night ...' marks a relative upswing in quality. Personally, I thank after those days when Jim Rooney brought 'Once

In A Very Blue Moon' and 'Last Of the True Believers' into the world. A time of simplicity, sincerity and a hell of a lot more certainty. Before this issue graces your palms, MCA will have released the second single from 'Late Night ...'. This time it's the Julie Gold tune 'Heaven'. For Nanci completists, the 12" and CD formats feature the previously unreleased 'Tumble And Fall'. And then there are the boys in the band, one of whom, **Tom Kimmel** will open the show. Kimmel had an interesting album, 'Circle Come Back' released by Polydor some back. No new pro-

duct is scheduled to tie in with this visit. (Indeed seems no-one had bothered telling Polydor UK that he was due!)

Following the departure of **Shane MacGowan** from the ranks of **The Pogues**, long time auxiliary member **Joe Strummer** has taken

over the vocal chores. You can catch the band at Aston Villa Leisure Centre on Saturday 5th. With 'Best Of ...'s from both The Clash and The Pogues vying for your bucks currently it seems that Strummer is enjoying the best of both worlds. If those Clash reunion rumours are true, he has some major decisions to make. And soon.

A couple of years back, if someone had come up a blueprint for a band which could musically span the last three decades, welding pop to traditional Celtic rhythms and country music, I'd have said 'stupid, impossible'. If proof were need that fantasies can come true then the **Saw Doctors** are it. Mix in some OTT onstage humour and craziness of the sort that would normally be branded twee and you end up with one hell of a night's entertainment. Unearth anyone who attended their sell-out Irish Centre gig a few months back and they'll confirm that in flash. This time around, the Galway guys are at The Institute. Digbeth on Sunday 15th. An early Xmas treat! **Rumillajita** bring their flutes, pan-pipes, charangos, guitars and drums all the way from Bolivia to the Midlands Art

Centre on Wednesday 11th. Currently, the band has a couple of new recordings available on cassette and CD. 'Urumpampa' and 'Rumillajita. Live at the Edinburgh Festival'.

The local folk clubs feature, in this final month of the year, the following artists: Fri 6th, **Martyn Wyndham-Read** (Market Tavern, Moseley St), **Dab Hand** (Woodman, Kingswinford); Sat 7th, **Mike Silver's Road Dog** (Red Lion, Kings Heath); Fri 13th, **Singers Night** (Market Tavern), **Singers Night** (Woodman); Sat 14th, **Steve Ashley Band** (Red Lion); Fri 20th, **Cuckoo Oak** (Market Tavern), Christmas Special with **Cosmotheke** (Woodman); Sat 21st, **Mad Jocks and Englishmen** (Red Lion), **Christmas Ceilidh** (Market Tavern at Bear Hotel, Bearwood); Sat 28th, **King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys** (Red Lion).

Crystal ball gazing brings news that a major songwriting hero — **Butch Hancock** — will be gracing these shores during January '92. **Jimmie Dale Gilmore**, along with his current road band of **Jesse Taylor** and **Bradley Kopp**, completes the party. Date and local venue to follow. Looking forward to April and from that not before time category, **Tom Russell** [with full road band in tow] will finally make his UK debut.

Finally a hope for the imminent future: Is there the faintest chance that happenings on the live front will be a little brighter in '92?



Nanci Griffith

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BARRY MANILOW NEC Birmingham

Curiosity alone brought me to the temple of imminent menopause. A pink wristbanded congregation of easy listening faithful discussing the finer points of every previous show on the tour!

This though, is not a normal hits on the road package. No sir, this is Bazza's homage to his love of the Broadway musical. Yup, wall to wall schmaltz. Credit where due, he did it all impeccably, within the style he has a fine voice, a good ear and fine phrasing. Sadly he squanders this by coating it in a glutinous, love me, showbiz goo.

Ultimately one can only imagine that he represents safe sex to a group of Gloria Hunniford would beez who accord Des O'Connor the same rating. Quite how Manilow squares wasting a talent by aiming so low is the real question here.

Steve Morris

REBEL PEBBLES Civic Hall Wolverhampton

Supporting Chesney Hawkes in front of 2200 screaming kids could, at the very least, be described as daunting. One would expect that the attempts of an all female band to do so would be fatal. The Rebel Pebbles, however, pulled it off with considerable success, despite the fact that, from my position in the photopit, the screaming throng behind me occasionally overpowered the band.

Combining highly catchy, memorable and melodic pop songs with musicianship and looks that would send The Bangles running to their guitar tutors and plastic surgeons, the band could emerge as quite a successful commodity. Not exactly me cup of tea musically, their material and image have more commercial appeal than any other all female band I can think of.

Top of the Pops here we come.

Mark Hadley



REBEL PEBBLES Photo by Mark Hadley



RUNRIG

Runrig Civic Hall Wolverhampton

The curtains finally parted, revealing the backdrop. A road skirted a lake and disappeared into the distant hills. Tradition! You take the high road One, two The Yellow Brick Road Everyone clap The Long And Winding Road Hey! The road not taken Two, three, two The Road And The Sky Huh! The Road Goes On Forever Me? I wish I'd taken the low road and a much earlier bath.

Confirmation that Runrig are now seasoned stadlum rockers was not the point.

Arthur Wood

SHOOT THE MOON Arthur's Bar Birmingham

Although guitarist Dean Jones reckons Jellyfish are their major touchstone and aspiration, listening to a set packed with more melodies and hooks than is decent for one band to possess, you find yourself free-associating through the likes of The Troggs, Haircut 100, FYC, Creedence guitars, Sailor and back catalogue of Atlantic R&B soul.

With what could be vaguely be called a lagoon look, this recently formed sextet specialise in instant pop, driven by piston-precision drumming, pounding bass, dynamic guitar and a flourish of underpinning keyboards. And top it all with Richard Brook's lazily, effortless vocal that's the rough equivalent of sandpapered cream. And the songs! Where do you start? The striding pop of 'Baby Blue' with its ba ba ba chorus, ridiculously catchy gems like 'Candy Girl', 'Green Is The Colour', 'Talk About Love' (which nicks U2's line about 'when love came to town'), 'I Don't Know What To Do', the jugbandish 'One And Only', a choppy 'Shake It Up' and the Smokey soul of 'Love Ain't Sweet'. And then they top it off with 'Mother Nature', a wondrous eco hoedown (echoedown?) that interpolates a dash of T Rex and just needs a fiddle to make it an unqualified masterpiece.

There's criticisms. They're still a bit too raw, they still have back of pub mentality in handling an audience and they need to vary the pace of the set because too much fizz eventually becomes gassy. I don't know if greatness beckons but without doubt Shoot The Moon have a Greatest Hits collection looking for an album to decorate.

Mike Davies

JULIA FORDHAM NEC Birmingham

Playing the Arena with the assurance of one born to do so Julia Fordham was at once sexy, sophisticated, sweet and sure-footed. Her honey dipped vocal flexibility empowering her impressive material with a quality few can command.

Surely large scale success can only be a sliver away, perhaps with the early '92 major film theme single, though in a way that would be sad, it being the weakest song in a winning set.

Incidentally, headlining Michael Bolton was dire; bullfrog bawling masquerading as soul. The Seaside Special style cut-out fishing hut in front of which he dismembered 'Dock Of The Bay' had me rushing for the exit.

Steve Morris

TIN MACHINE Civic Hall Wolverhampton

Tin Machine is quite a departure for David Bowie. Whilst the band's near fanatical following revolve around the legendary vocalist, their live gigs include no Bowie solo material and the emphasis is on the band as a cohesive unit rather than individual musicians/composers. With a minimum of lighting, pyrotechnics and stage embellishments (although the gear was notably hi-tech stuff) Tin Machine performed a two hour set of band material, immaculately performed but with a raw, almost punk-like aggression.

Bowie made a conscious effort not to dominate the proceedings, not too easy for a frontman, sharing occasional vocals with drummer Hunt and leaving plenty of space for instrumental diversions. Particularly notable was the guitar work of Reeves Gabrels, reminiscent of the playing approach of Adrian Belew, tweeking numerous unorthodox sounds from the instrument with anything from technique to a selection of vibrators.

It is unfortunate that Bowie's presence in the band breeds scepticism. His credibility and past successes allow the band to be expressive if unorthodox, without the creative restrictions frequently imposed by record companies.

Mark Hadley



TIN MACHINE
Photo by Mark Hadley