

# LIVE

Edited by Steve Lamacq

## VIC REEVES AND BOB MORTIMER EDINBURGH GILDED BALLOON

"OH MR Ankle Bracelet Maker, make me an ankle bracelet, but make it a big one, 'cos me sister's just gone down with elephantitis."

Forget Tin Machine, the only Reeves and Hunt I'm interested in are called Vic and Miles. And as for Mortimer, really *Rumpole Of The Bailey* isn't that good. Not when you check what Bob's up to on stage. Harnessed in a little pink rucksack and wearing one of those cute brown suits and his skewiff quiff that makes him look like Bruno the Bear, he's spread-eagled on the floor squinting through a crack at a script from a popular situation comedy called *Duty Free*. In turns Mr Mortimer and Mr Reeves push each other across the floor to get a peep at another world, at situations that bear no relation to reality... but you know all this.

What you might not know is, before they got all hoity-toity on the television, Vic and Bob used to do a lot of intimate occasions like this. Two hundred people in a room, crammed round tables, jostling in the aisles, unsurprisingly they are still fairly adept at warming up a crowd faster than a microwave in a hot-dog cart. A devil-may-care attitude prevails.

After a week in which the first two faltering nights were followed by a third when Bob forgot all his lines because he'd been up all night dancing, the show reached a plateau of insanity that mere mortals could only match were they to dabble with mind-warping drugs.

The only props on stage are a large throne and a tray with the shrunken Beatles on it. There's no Les, Novelty Island or Judge Nutmeg, just the bare bones of their comedy. To set the tone, they fish out a few of the many (three) letters they've had sent to the fan club, the first from a top girls school — as read by Vic — points out how sexy the man is and how they'd like to have it off with him but not the little bloke who carries the stick. Predictably the letter is written in Reeves' handwriting. Bob, in turn, rips out a missive from the King who thanks him for the Megadeth recommendation and encourages him to keep up the good work. It is simple, sloppy, loveable fun.

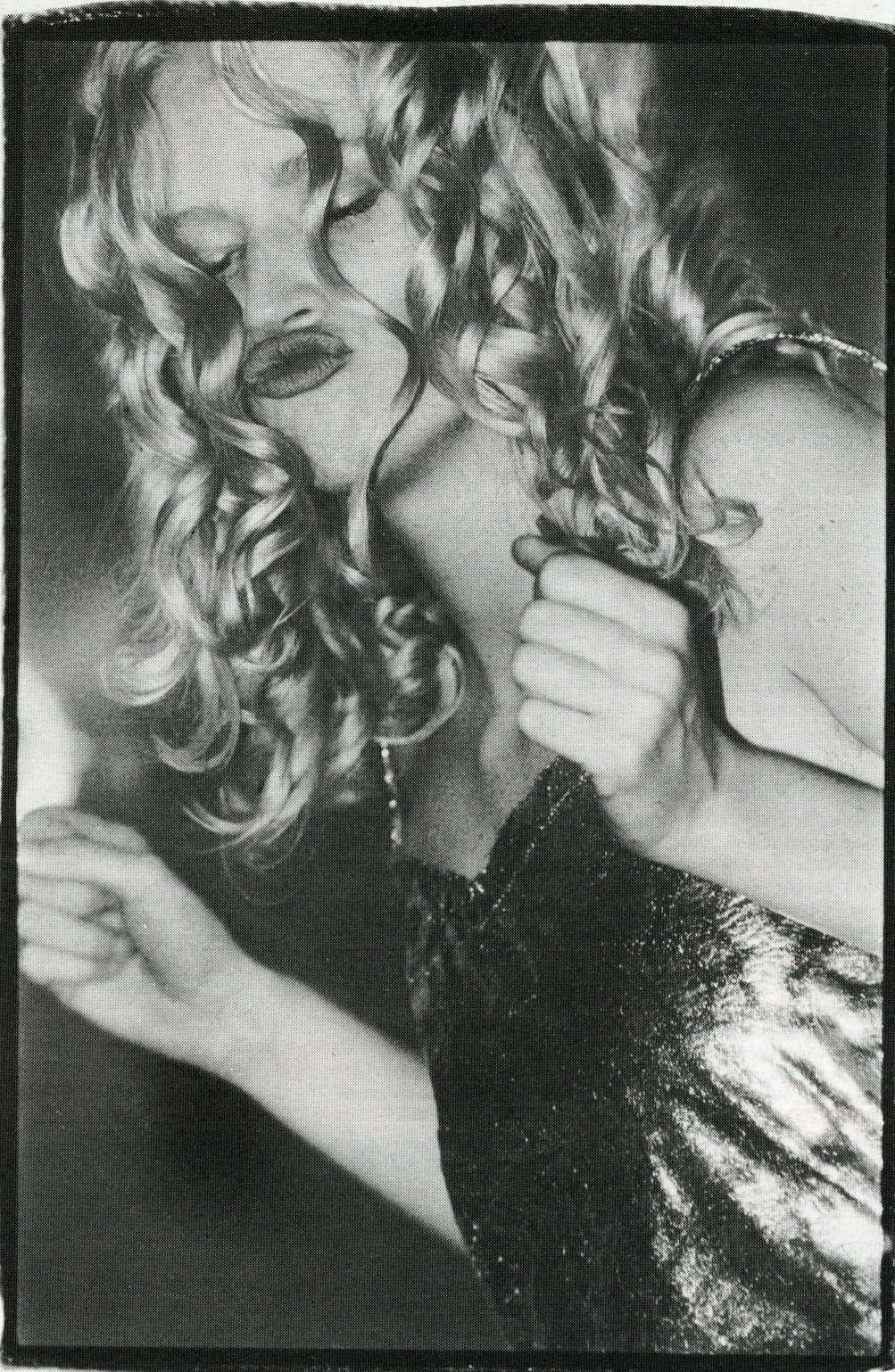
Bob snuggles in at Vic's feet to hear a bedtime story featuring Christopher Robin-style characters named after the bosoms of a cow. A special guest by the name of Charlie Chuck intervenes, he has the face of Max Wall and the fuzz of the Hair Bear Bunch, he is from Leeds and recites simple as muck, hard as nails words that sound very funny.

Back after the break come the playboys of the unemployment generation, The Stotts; no other men have ever looked quite so dashing with gaffa tape for eyebrows. Received like Mighty White in the court of King Alfred, Donald and Davie introduce discoloured loud cousin Dougie, a man who's been in more tank tops than the Brigade Of Guards.

A fantastic parade of queer stares, peculiar sentences, hip wobbles, and surreal flirtation surround the duo like a cloak. At their best they are undoubtedly geni.

Jimmy Brown

# KITSCH OF DISTINCTION



Pout of order: Stella shimmys and shimmers but fails to get off the launch pad

## THE WOLFGANG PRESS LONDON NEW CROSS VENUE

THEY WANT your body and they want your guts for garters too. Once upon a time, back in the first half of the last decade, you could be A Certain Ratio or Shriekback or even PiL or David Byrne. You could be a rumbling rhythmic machine, a dirty funk thing, laying claim to the dancefloor and exposing your black and knobby soul to the wallflowers too. People would think it smart. But as Britain has gradually become more and more a minor export market for European DJs' ideas of (p)leisure, that sort of gruff, wired, threatening foot-tapper has virtually been crossed off the guest list.

Mostly it's all been for the good. But it's unfortunate that The Wolfgang Press, having been around for all that time, are only now hitting a happy-sad medium with their *Disco Noir*. Looking at them as a kind of arm-wrestling match between Nick Cave and all dance music apart from Hi-NRG and House, they are now, fascinatingly, locked solid.

There is Mick, bending double, coughing up glisty words. "Sour" he grunts. "Filthy" he spits. "Soulless" he shakes. "Hex" he burps. "Mensch" he mentions. But at least that's a suit he's wearing, not a blood-spattered apron. And there's the invading noises, a caterwaul of guitar here or a splice of Velvet Underground there.

Against that, there's the pounding hip-hop propulsion, the bottomless basslines coming off ex-Throwing Muser Leslie Langston's fingers, and, every now

and then, even a friendly pop song. 'Louis XIV' is the friendliest song ever to be written about French bloody history. Throw in glamour — well at any rate Annie Anxiety, looking like a Christmas tree with eyelashes, duetting with Mick — and you have something like all-round entertainment.

Those songs which don't quite get going on the 'Queer' album are all brake-failed juggernauts, live. 'Riders On The Heart' is indestructible. 'Sucker' is massive and vicious. Oldies 'Kansas' and 'Sweatbox' are clanking hulks with their pulling power still intact. And for all that, The Wolfgang Press are still guerrilla fighting against the great 18-30 annexation of Britain. 'A Question Of Time' is near enough Right Said Fred's 'I'm Too Sexy' for a lot of confusion to go on after dark. The Wolfgang Press — too sexy for their books.

Roger Morton

## THE CRANBERRIES LONDON CAMDEN UNDERWORLD

HA HA ha. An 'insider' told me that the singer out of The Cranberries was "a young, female Van Morrison". What? Fat and bald, grunts a lot?

She isn't, of course. But she is Irish, which is presumably where this not-very-useful recommendation springs from. The Cranberries, in fact, are far, far removed from the professional Irishness which so often addles the otherwise impartial minds of the rock press. They may as well come from Stony Stratford for all the geographical clues in their music. In fact, The Cranberries' all-pervasive Goth/shoe-gazing stage

'presence' is very Home Counties.

Pah! We quibble over map references! This lot make reasonable mood music for manic-depressives, this is their second London show, their debut Island single is still four weeks off, and to start knocking them at this tender stage would be tantamount to drowning a puppy for urinating in the lounge.

Fragile, buck-toothed, boot-sale-dressed vocalist Dolores O'Riordan, all Lady Di coy and Liz Frazer weird, is a pretty arresting frontperson. Crowd-shy, yes, but the supplier of quite exquisite oral gambols in *Sundays Country*, not unpleasantly gift-wrapped in the tippety-tap Durutti Column/Joni Mitchell soundtrack of her three identically-turned-out cohorts. All aged between 17 and 19, too! Watch this band with interest. Berry interesting indeed.

Andrew Collins

## THIN WHITE ROPE SHEFFIELD LEADMILL

THIN WHITE Rope are the serial killers of American rock. Outwardly they appear to be unnervingly normal, the kind of quiet, 'regular' guys who always live with their mothers and wouldn't get recognised outside their own gigs. Yet beneath the apparently benign surface broods a black and macabre fury that manifests into a chilling performance.

Guy Kyser's weary rasp, coarse and splintered, like a psychopathic hybrid of Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen and Michael Stipe, shivers through the brutal music like an Arctic wind curling around a frost-

## INTASTELLA MANCHESTER HACIENDA

THE INSTANT Stella emerges through the rolling fog and swirling lights, casually clutching her customary bottle of lager, I'm reminded of the 1,001 other reviews that started with exactly the same observation and know immediately that Intastella are wedged in an enormous rut. And so soon.

When Intastella rose from the ashes of Laugh barely a year ago, they put glamour, pizzazz and all that jazz back into pop life. Suddenly kitsch was cool and Intastella were charming the cotton socks off everyone. Their slapdash approach to love and life. Those weird and wild ideas fuelled by cheap beer, that sweet alternative to faceless, tasteless Techno.

And then there was Stella. At a time when music had never seemed more bloated with whining, whingeing little boys and their divvy little bands, she kicked them in the crotch, pushed them out the way and nicked all the rider. Stella was a star in skin-tight lycra. She drank, smoked tabs, swore like a fishwife and sang like an angel.

Tonight she's still doing much the same, she still shimmys and shimmers, but she's lost that cocky conviction. Maybe she's sick of the dickheads down the front gurning like carp in polluted water, trying to sneak a peek up her dress. Maybe she's sick of the way every column inch that's ever been written about Intastella compares her to every blonde bimbo there's ever been and ignores the rest of the band. Maybe she's just sick of it all. Christ, I know I would be. Intastella were never about one fit bit and her backing band. That was the whole point.

But back to reality, and, despite the humidity and sound system hangover, Intastella grind into gear with 'Dream Some Paradise'; breathless with anticipation, flushed with romance and whispering sweet nothings. Next stop is 'Bendy', a fascinating ode to nothing in particular, which bleeps and burbles with electronic doodles, thrusting its pelvis to the occasional burst of twisted psychedelia.

So far, so groovy, but by 'Intastella Overdrive' it's Intastella on autopilot. They've exhausted shorter, faster, better and, wilting in the heat, are starting to lose the plot. Their dreamscape soundtrack, which always seems so deliciously stoned yet ready to roll up and on, now just seems hazy and lacklustre. Intastella are so spaced out, so laid back, they're too busy stretching, yawning and rubbing the sleep dust out their eyes to get down, kick arse and take control.

If they didn't have it in them, I wouldn't give a damn, but Intastella are capable of far more than pedestrian performances. They're not made to be yet another two-bit band, but first they've got to get a grip and woo back their guts and glory before they can float, float on.

Mandi James



Stella attempts to fall asleep onstage

bitten hand. Senses are simultaneously sharpened by the stark desolation of the lyrics and numbed by the mesmeric twin guitar conflicts.

The Rope's bitter songs of loss and torment, laced as they are with the pervasive scent of decay, are not so much brought to life as exhumed. Like a ravenous parasite, TWR feed off and debilitate their audience, with an intensity that is as rare in a live band as it is exhausting to witness.

'Puppet Dog' initially introduces itself as a moment to relax and apply any medical aid that may be necessary. Its gentle guitar pattern, surely nicked from the *Camberwick Green* theme, is a

welcome tear in the taut fabric of TWR's relentless menace. Roger Kunkel smiles reassuringly like John F Kennedy in the Dallas motorcade, as the terse, warped lyric grows darker than a Black Hole in a power cut.

Ultimately, TWR's strength proves to be their undoing. As the set grinds on, the Rope become a little, if you will, 'frayed', the unceasing bleakness become a suffocating shroud. If they'd have left it at ten songs instead of the nearer 20 on the scorecard at the end, TWR would have been untouchable. As it was, they gave themselves too much rope, and proceeded to use it.

Jonny Thatcher

PICTURES: PETER WALSH