

OFF THE KERB PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# Sean Hughes

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**ALAN DAVIES**

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- TUES 10TH NOV: IPSWICH - CORN EXCHANGE 0473 215544 8PM
- THUR 12TH NOV: BIRMINGHAM - TOWN HALL 021 236 2392 8PM
- FRI 13TH NOV: MANCHESTER - APOLLO THEATRE 061 236 9922 8PM
- WED 18TH NOV: GLASGOW - CITY HALL 041 227 5511 8PM
- SAT 21ST NOV: BRISTOL - COLSTON HALL 0272 223682/83cc 8PM
- SUN 22ND NOV: SWANSEA - GRAND THEATRE 0792 47515 7.30PM
- WED 25TH NOV: DARTFORD - ORCHARD THEATRE 0322 343333 7.45PM
- THUR 26TH NOV: BOURNEMOUTH - PAVILION 0202 297297 8PM
- FRI 27TH NOV: SOUTHSEA - KING'S THEATRE 0705 828282 7.30PM
- SAT 28TH NOV: CAMBRIDGE - CORN EXCHANGE 0223 357851 8PM
- SUN 29TH NOV: CRAWLEY - HAWTH CENTRE 0293 553636 8PM
- TUES 1ST DEC: READING - HEXAGON 0734 591591 8PM
- SUN 6TH DEC: LONDON - QUEEN'S THEATRE 071 494 5040 8.30PM
- WED 9TH DEC: AYLESBURY - CIVIC CENTRE 0296 86009 8PM
- SUN 13TH DEC: LONDON - QUEEN'S THEATRE 071 494 5040 8.30PM

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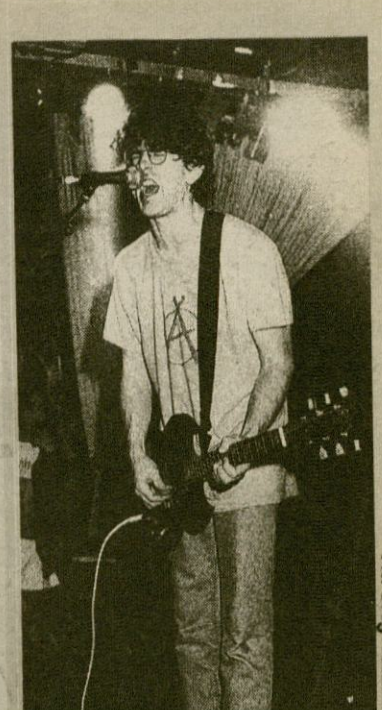
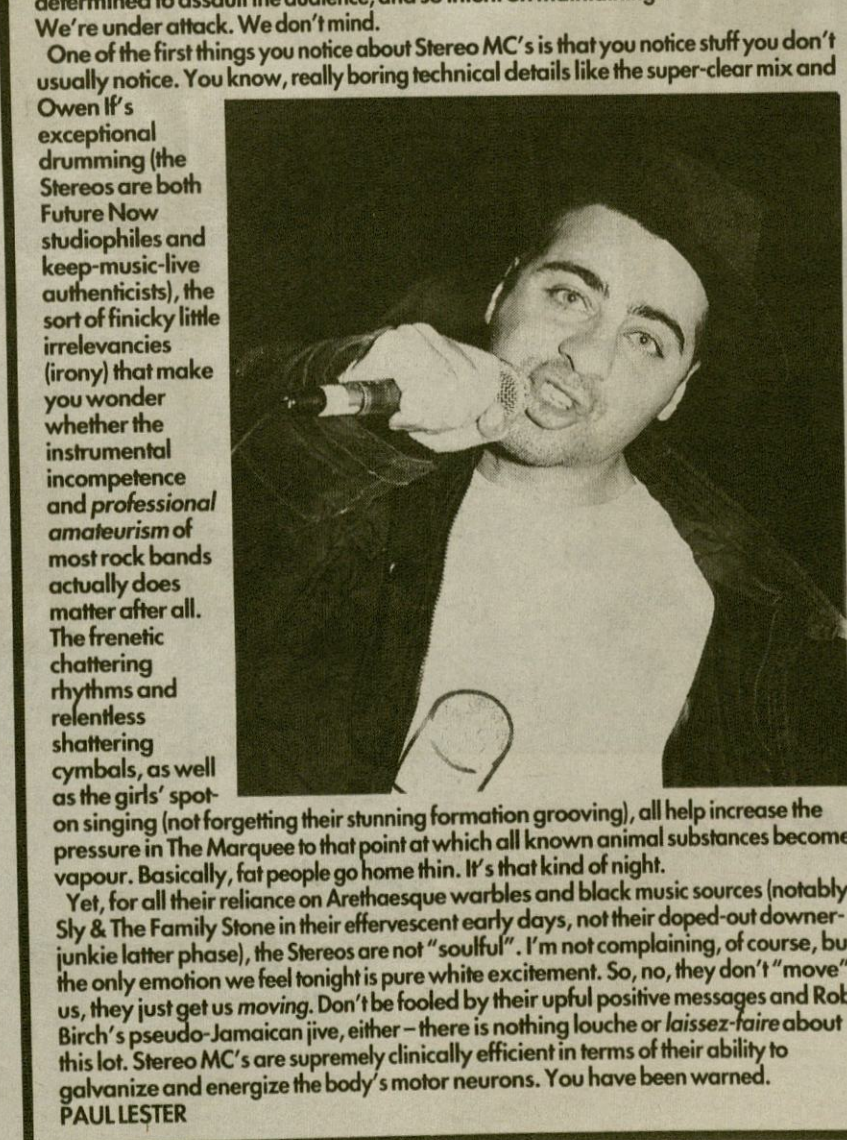
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**INSPIRAL CARPETS**  
BRIXTON ACADEMY, LONDON  
WHEN they do the "Rock N' Roll Years" documentary for 1989, who'll be on the soundtrack? "Fool's Gold", of course. "Hallelujah" by the Mondays. And the Inspiral? Er, didn't they do the theme for "The 8:15 From Manchester"? Those who have the firmest grasp of the zeitgeist make history but are inevitably left stranded when time's tide turns. So it's not too surprising that of all the old Mancunian candidates it's the Inspiral who tumble into a second term of minor chart success while those who really had the tunes and 'tude languish in litigation and rehab.  
When Clint plays the opening chords of "This Is How It Feels", I'm reminded of what a charmingly gloomy anachronism it was. The stuff from his new album, however, confirms their singular lack of scope. They remain engagingly, solidly consistent, a quality that makes for reliable opening batsmen and terminally dull pop music.  
"Biiches Brew", the new single, is not, I'm sure you will be surprised to hear, noticeably influenced by the Miles Davis album. At least I don't think so. You never can tell with the Inspiral. They close with their cover of "Tainted Love", possibly the compest song ever written. In their hands, however, through disregard for such imponderables as melody, and restraint, it is transformed into a terrace stomp and hymn to utter heterosexuality. It strikes me that, given a Rugs' rethink, even "L'Heres Midi d'un Faun" could be turned into a terrace stomp. It also strikes me that the Inspiral Carpets are the least subversive band on earth.  
STEPHEN TROUSSE

**LIVE!**  
**STEREO MC'S/BLADE**  
MARQUEE, LONDON  
BLADE is the Billy Bragg of hip hop, a solo DIY rapper who releases his own low-fi records on his own frontroom label, and who offers a straight-ahead, stripped-down version of the genre he loves, with just some other geezer on a pair of turntables for company. It's all very honest-man-of-the-people and Tottenham Court Road busker, mixed with a bit of British Music Hall (Blade holds an Electro Made Simple class on stage tonight as he bravely attempts to teach the crowd how to sound like a slow-mo hip hop rhythm track - "dum-di-dum-dum-di-dum", I think it goes). Because of this, and even at his most hardcore cutting, Blade is more Arthur Askey than Ice T, buzzing around like a busy, busy bee. Clearly, he could make a fortune entertaining blue-rinsed grannies on the end-of-the-pier circuit. Difficult though it may be, try and picture the formerly great Happy Mondays, only more preoccupied with funk than pharmaceuticals. You have just imagined Stereo MC's. If The Dance Band With The Floating Apostrophe do shove little round globules of chemicals down their gobs, there's a difference) of "Fade Away" to the explosively climactic "Pressure", the place is drenched in what can only be described as an avalanche of adrenalin'.  
From the ferocious exuberance (not jolly ebullience; there's a difference) of "Fade Away" to the explosively climactic "Pressure", the place is drenched in what can only be described as an avalanche of adrenalin'. It's no coincidence that astonished participants later on in the lobby will compare this onslaught to The Sex Pistols. Now I know what my dad means when he keeps on about his punk rock youth.  
Stereo MC's (remember them?) are one bald mixmaster extraordinaire known as The Head, one truly brilliant drummer called Owen If, three sexy-but-not-superfluous chick vocalists with sexy-but-not-superfluous names like Cath, Verona and Andrea, plus Mr Incredible Bouncing Charisma, Rob Birch - a blonde Shaun Ryder with a goatee beard and heaps of scruffy Dickensian urchin-meets-street-tuff ragga cool. The fact that Birch is wearing a pair of dungarees ample enough to house several Croatian refugees has little bearing on the Stereos' music - baggy it ain't. This is more like a Las Vegas cabaret revue troupe hijacked by a gang of Inner London council estate reprobates armed with a panoply of state-of-the-art weaponry. Rarely have I seen a group so determined to assault the audience, and so intent on maintaining the offensive.  
We're under attack. We don't mind.  
One of the first things you notice about Stereo MC's is that you notice stuff you don't usually notice. You know, really boring technical details like the super-clear mix and Owen If's exceptional drumming (the Stereos are both Future Now studioophiles and keep-music-live authenticists), the sort of finicky little irrelevancies (irony) that make you wonder whether the instrumental incompetence and professional amateurism of most rock bands actually does matter after all. The frenetic chattering rhythms and relentless shattering cymbals, as well as the girls' spot-on singing (not forgetting their stunning formation grooving), all help increase the pressure in The Marquee to that point at which all known animal substances become vapour. Basically, fat people go home thin. It's that kind of night.  
Yet, for all their reliance on Aethraesque warbles and black music sources (notably, Sly & The Family Stone in their effervescent early days, not their doped-out downer-junkie latter phase), the Stereos are not "souful". I'm not complaining, of course, but the only emotion we feel tonight is pure white excitement. So, no, they don't "move" us, they just get us moving. Don't be fooled by their upful positive messages and Rob Birch's pseudo-Jamaican jive, either - there is nothing louche or laissez-faire about this lot. Stereo MC's are supremely clinically efficient in terms of their ability to galvanize and energize the body's motor neurons. You have been warned.  
PAUL LESTER



**SEBADOH**  
CAMDEN UNDERWORLD, LONDON  
YOU arrive at a Sebadoh gig in a state of hopeless addition. Yeah, you brought it on yourself. Dosed yourself up on "Rockin' The Forest", abused the mood-altering properties of "Sebadoh III", and now you're pathetic. Scraps of poisonous lyric, precisely measured lines of acid-sharp guitar are coursing around your system. Innocent enough, you suppose. Maybe. But it's disturbing to catch yourself smiling at the world while inside your head there's a whistling roar of Old Testament proportions and a devil grunting "Waaah! SCARS FOR EYES!"  
On they come, Jason, Lou and Eric, three loping, curly, jeansy guys whomake Salman Rushdie look like a limelight-grabbing hustler. For once I sympathise with the beery dork yelling "Go for it!". They start with something thrumming and vague, then proceed into a set which feels like more winter for us wintering Brits. Nobody minds. It feels natural. You're here in the hope of witnessing something extraordinary, a perfect, God-given musical moment that couldn't possibly occur when a band is rigidly rehearsed or restricted to a set with a planned dynamic. Sure Sebadoh think too hard. Well, don't you?  
I see their music as a series of attempted escapes from the stranglehold of cerebralty. Dude. As all things of profound importance (death, sex, pain, birth, love, hate) are easily rationalised by the brain (see Lou's guitar crash to the floor, and he and Eric kinda relating over the occurrence: "Uh, gee Eric. That guitar costs, um, a lotta money." "Yuh, okay"). Sebadoh want to take that intrinsically irrational stuff back to where it belongs, back to the realm of emotional sensation. Back to life, back to carnality.  
They seem disorganised, but there is a plan at work. That is to start with a song, maybe a semi-resigned, semi-euphoric, semi-detached song like Lou's "Brand New Love", and then let it dissolve just when you're getting the hang of it. Then they'll follow some strand of a tune or rhythm through long minutes until there is a resolution. Whatever you hear will be something no one has ever heard before, a miracle not stumbled upon, but hunted down and trapped.  
The breakdowns take the form of roaring surges, noodling goof-offs and gothic murmurings (perhaps a slightly Scooby-Doo/haunted house gothic). The song is merely what's happening in the foreground, and allows the background shadows, the subtlet, the atmosphere to be coloured in. So Lou's "Really Insane" is not merely an eat-your-heart-out-Woody-I'm-the-master-of-self-loathing whine ("I'm very spoilt/Addicted to control"), it becomes a f\*\*\*ing novel in a four minute blip. She doesn't like oral sex. He's greedy. He's suicidal. But he's only kidding himself. He's so full of shit. No, he's pure. He howls. He shrugs. Blimey.  
They've got their friend Robert Casper up there. He's a poet. The last line goes to him, for it sums up the stillness of this night and the feeling of unsatisfied longing in all of us.  
"Somewhere in Texas, dies like a pack of dogs waiting for something to come along and engulf."  
SALLY MARGARET JOY