

## LIVE!

**THE CRANBERRIES**  
**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CORK**

THE Cranberries are probably too tender for all of this, but right now they have all our hopes to weigh them down. They're charming little innocents, so untouched, so perfect, so astoundingly pure. They've come from a city that isn't Dublin, from a county where politics are conservative and where Gaelic games and rugby offer some small social hope. They think small, embarrassed by what they've suddenly become. By what we've painted them up to be. To singer Dolores, pop songs have nothing to do with video and make-up.

Nothing to do with fanciful clothes. She's stopped reading her band's press because she doesn't need us to tell her who she is. And when she stands still, saying little, in places like this, it's because she's very unsure about all of the fuss. The Cranberries, understand, are charmingly naive. It is their single greatest attribute.

They have no idea, see, of how good they are. Of how important they might yet become to those of us who've become too familiar with mediocrity and mundanity. The Cranberries had never heard of The Sundays or Throwing Muses nine months ago. The songs just happened. They just came out. We believe that. The Cranberries are too frail to be contrived. And while a line like "I was just 16 years old when I married you/And now it's just a stupid mess I don't know what to do" might seem trite, then you have to understand that Dolores is 18 years old and coming from what is essentially a very narrow rural tradition. And she writes nothing like The Saw Doctors.

Tonight is all very full, lots of old songs, gorgeous songs, "Put Me Down" with its spine-chill jangle and hum, "Linger" with its gloriously

spellbound simplicity, "Dreams" with its curious drum thud. Dolores even plays some acoustic guitar but it looks all wrong, all too cumbersome for her. It still sounds very fine, though, and "Reason" and "Pathetic Senses" become huge shimmering pop songs, songs that Johnny Marr, for instance, would collect and play. "Lair" owes to Pixies' "Is She Weird" but we're not here to look for clues. We're here to love a band wholly. To hug them and to kiss them. Tonight beauty does what beauty does best. Be beautiful.

COLM O'CALLAGHAN

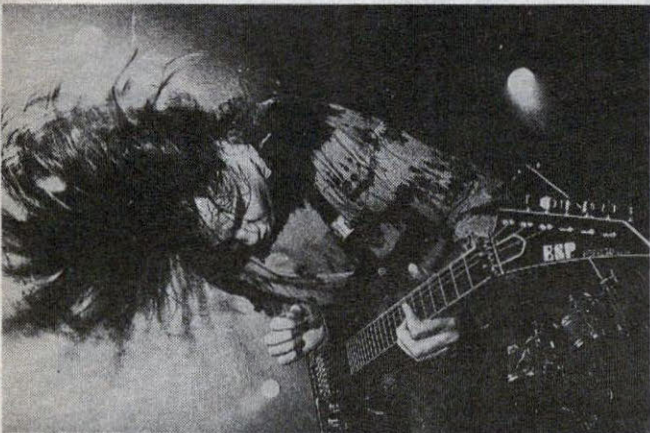
**CHICANE**  
**SUBTERANIA, LONDON**

CHICANE do not fit neatly into any category. They toy with the guitar effects of the Chapterhouse clan, the full-blooded rhythms of a hard-ass rock band and the throbbing basslines of the best Echo & The Bunnymen songs.

"Sunrising", which I'm told will be their next single, starts well with a cutting leadline and a choppy, scale-hopping vocal, but from there on sadly fails to grasp the attention. "Inflammable" is much more, er, fiery with venomous words flying over a wall of fuzz. The final moments are particularly enthralling, with the rhythm section speeding to a frenzy while the guitars maintain the sweetest of refrains.

Unfortunately, Chicane get quite upset when the audience choose to be attentive rather than ecstatic. If they had looked a little closer, they'd have seen that we were just mesmerised by the multi-coloured textures of their music. Judging by this reaction, it won't be long before the name Chicane is on the tip of your tongue. Savour the taste.

ZANE



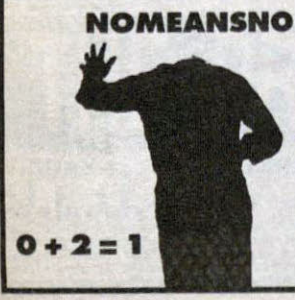
PIC: SUSAN MOORE

**THE BEYOND**  
**THE MARQUEE, LONDON**

THE Beyond are so impeccably f\*\*\*ing cool. Everything about them — their name, the tee-shirts they wear emblazoned with bright abstract prints, their stance, convinced, marvellously self-contained, just the right side of arrogant, their ruthless, intense, utterly prepossessing songs — all of it suggests that right here, right now, in our own backyard we have the most innovative rock band since Metallica. Their audience, their hardcore audience, are a weird mix of bombed crusties, High Street girls and cute Tim Burgess lookalikes, all of them completely conversant with The Beyond's tales of ordinary madness. At the back, by the bar, stand another audience, a large gang of benedimed crinklies and dusty old goths, finally united in absolute bewilderment. The Beyond are playing to a new kind of rock fan — metal ravers. Inadvertently, they've reinstated the generation gap, and by Christ can you see it on the faces of the bar-proppers. They're estranged, made to look and feel tame, quaint, positively antique.

In 45 minutes The Beyond prove themselves to be startlingly, beguilingly unorthodox. They are a metal band but they render metal liquid, languid, freeform. "Sick", for instance, begins with high, impossibly delicate guitar then whirled down with a nauseous rush. "Blind Leads Blind", backed by

strobe-light, is the kind of mercurial thrash that could induce epileptic fits. It came close, you should've seen the crowd. Singer Whitby's voice moves effortlessly between a melancholy moan, as with the single "One Step Too Far", and a rapt, rapped stutter ("The Eve Of My Release"). The beats can be as loose as a jazz rhythm or as violent as a cleaver hacking its way through bone and gristle. This is metal that knows it's 1991, that knows what time it is.

That cool.  
THE STUD BROTHERS

## OUT OF FOCUS

**BLUR**  
**OCTAGON CENTRE, SHEFFIELD**

IT'S Saturday night at Sheffield University Student Union, that hotbed of political activism (motto: "Our motto alone is more ideologically sound than an entire edition of The Independent on Sunday"), and the kids, not one of whom looks a day over 15, are out in force, an army in Charlatans tee-shirts. It's also the second night of the brand new shiny Blur tour (motto: "Coming soon to a theatre near you!") and Damon is shouting "Come out with your hands above your head" through a megaphone. Well, he may or may not be, because the words are unintelligible, but it's a great prop.

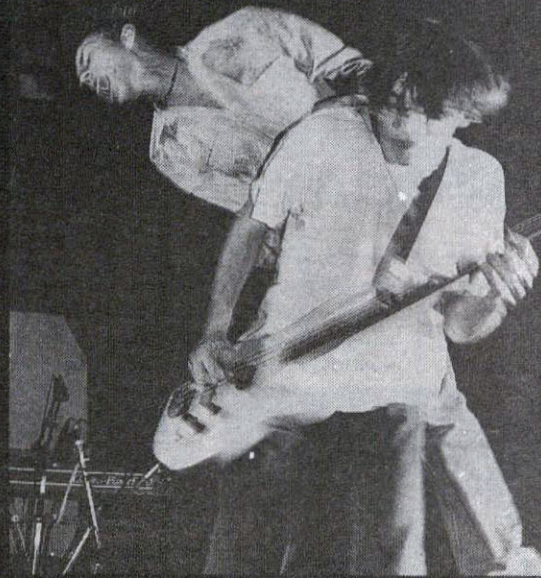
So are the rest of the band, who pretty much keep their heads down, and occasionally serve as targets for Damon to bounce off like a pinball. Later, Alex, the prettiest bass player since Kim Deal, will try to ingratiate himself with various members of the British Medical Association who are having a black-tie do at our hotel. Later, Dave, the no-nonsense drummer, will be doing Peter Sellers impressions. Later, Graham, the guitarist with the silver throat and the golden note, will be affectionately table-overturningly drunk. For now, they leave the visuals to the unfeasibly good-looking Damon (motto: "The kid oughta be in pictures"), who will later play a duet at the piano with a saxophone player Graham meets in the gents at the hotel, and is now getting buffeted around the stage by an unseen wind. One minute he'll spin around like a kid in a playground, the next he'll stagger in slow-motion like Neil Armstrong's giant leap for mankind, but mostly he lets himself get knocked around; he dances like he's being pummeled. And you get just a glimpse of a kind of reckless masochism — you can imagine him hanging upside down outside his hotel window taunting passing skinheads: "Yo! Egghead!" In fact, he'll sit around drinking Bloody Marys and observing the antics around him with a sardonic smile. But never mind.

The gig itself is pretty rough and ready, with only the most cleverly constructed of their harmonies (like "She's So High") surviving the speeded-up versions of the songs that

come tumbling out one after the other with barely time for a "Thanks" in between. And yet, at times, when the songs got a little lost in the clutter, when it would get noisy but not really be noise, when Damon would sit, Phil Collins-style, behind the keyboard and there'd be nothing to look at, I'd feel a kind of weariness. As if something, the drama, was missing.

Still, "Bang" is particularly caustic, with Damon practically squalling "I don't need anyone", and the half-lovely, half-annoying "Sing", which they do as an encore, is supremely headache-inducing, as they play the pounding parts with extra emphasis. It's an interesting concept: pop music as a challenge to the audience's tolerance. But it's during the "oh-oh-oh, oo-oo-oo" bits on "Slow Down" that I realise the obvious (always the best thing to realise): Blur aren't saying anything. Their sole purpose, and importance, begins and ends with being Blur. It's a smart move: after all, they're good at it. But what makes their greatness is also their limitation. In this way, they are exactly like Cher. At least if they last another 20 years, they too can wear see-through bodystockings and fright wigs to the Oscars.

CAREN MYERS



PIC: STEPHEN SWEET

**SHABBA RANKS/  
RAGGA TWINS**  
**THE EVENT, BRIGHTON**

THIS is bass territory. Time and treble lose all meaning. Roots and dancehall take over, peppered "wit an excess amount a lyrics" by the PA toaster. You said it guy. "Ragga Twins soon come," we're promised. Within a couple of hours two men take the stage, stalking, hopping, growling and chanting like a pair of pissed-off dubbed-up Donald Ducks — now that's entertainment. Their set has sandpaper shoulderpads and sliced up ears for breakfast. I can't make out a word of it, but before I can say co-co-come again? they've been driven off by a faulty turntable.

Shabba Ranks' band is tight, fluent and capable of putting out some ludicrously lecherous grooves. Much like Shabba himself, who arrives in a puffy overcoat with a dangly scrotum substitute depending from his belt. Must get one of those. Much groin-pumping and monitor-humping ensues, but that's incidental to the sounds coming off the stage.

Shabba's rough-edged baritone is on fine form, the syllables pinballing off the echo chamber. The mix is loud and clear, and hard as nails with leather jackets.

Shabba's lectures on underage sex, slackness, pirate radio and whatever are a bit too frequent for my taste, but they have their moments. "Push your head before you start pushing anything else," is his advice on schooling to teens everywhere. Then it's on with the songs. "Wicked In Bed" lives down to its title, and "Trailer Load A Girls" is equally sly, raunchy and suspect. "Housecall" takes lovers' rock outside and teaches it the facts of life.

Shabba tells us that he's been striving for ten years to be a reggae professional, and he "appreciates our appreciation." I don't know if he will be dancehall's first superstar, but he can cross over onto my speakers anytime. Wicked.

DAVID BENNUN

**BEDAZZLED**  
**THE RICHMOND, BRIGHTON**

DESPITE the fact that lead singer Laurence used to be in Apple Mosaic with Ian Dunch, Bedazzled are actually nothing like EMF. And, despite the fact that they're one of those groups that quietly get signed to major labels without any fuss or blather and which make you wonder how closely multi-national record companies' A&R departments are linked with their tax and accounts offices, Bedazzled really aren't that bad at all. In a minor league kind of way, of course. Still, considering the last few months have seen our new talent discovering novel ways to spell "mediocre", it's no surprise we're forced to salute bands with at least a modicum of spark and suss. You've got to make the effort, I suppose.

Bedazzled resemble all the right groups for all the wrong reasons. Allow me to explain. With the exception of Laurence, they're all in their early twenties, so it's highly unlikely they ever bought records by all the people their music thrillingly reminds me of tonight. Plus, I ask them after the gig, and the chaps in the band convince me that, no, they've never even heard of Shoes, Dwight Twilley, Cheap Trick, The Raspberries, The Sneakers, Stories or any other of the spate of Anglophile Hollies/Kinks/Who/Stones/Beatles-obsessed outfits who emerged in America in the early and late Seventies. So the fact that "Somersault" sounds like The Rubinoos' "Hard To Get" is purely coincidental, likewise the startling resemblance of "Postcard" to Big Star's "Oh My Soul". And surely I'm the only sicko here who reckons "Ouch" is like The Knack power-popping through Television's seminal "Marquee Moon". Let's check. Yes, I am.

Bedazzled are very slightly eponymous. It's a start.  
PAUL LESTER