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A capital event even though it's not Dublin

AT THE Second Irish International Music Seminar in Dublin last September, Julian Gough, a young Galway pop writer and singer, took to the podium.

"Dublin is a seething hell of rock bands and journalists. It is full of record company people and hasn't produced hugely successful rock bands in ten years.

"Hungry and original and successful bands always come from the provinces or the rest of the unfashionable suburbs," he ranted and lots of industry people laughed half-heartedly and somewhat nervously in their seats.

Julian Gough was right. And he still is.

"Cork Rock" proved that. And, of course, it was Julian Gough's own band, the rather sublimely artful popsters, *Toasted Heretic*, who stole the weekend casually and without much fuss. *Toasted Heretic*, you see, know what they can do. They work on their own terms and without the numbingly petty back-slapping that has, over ten years, isolated Dublin and its pop people. *Toasted Heretic* are hungry and original. In two years they will be huge. Alright, laugh if you like. Just remember where and when you saw this and remember all



about those who laugh last.

Now then, forgive me if I sound nationalistic/parochial here, but "Cork Rock" worked because it set itself in Cork. Ian Wilson, the event's executive producer, has long since told us all that this particular feast could never work in Dublin. He could be right and he might be wrong. I don't know. But the fact that "Cork Rock" ran without the press and the editorial interest of many of this country's premier media is a tribute. Again. And also a bit of an acute embarrassment. Again.

The reluctance, even refusal, of most of our national papers to get to grips with "Cork Rock" is nothing new. Okay, they may well argue that "Cork Rock" is some marginal, mini-festival somewhere in Munster where some unknown bands play to unknown fans. But that's wrong. Very wrong. This should well be a national interest feature and, in an ideal world would be. But there is something underfoot. As "Cork Rock" proved Julian Gough's theory — the most remarkable bands of the weekend came from Athy (*Intoxicating Rhythm Section*), Belfast (*Therapy*), Carlow (*Azure Days*), Limerick (*The Cranberries/A Touch of Oliver*), and Galway (*Toasted Heretic*) — it also betrayed Dublin's gasping pop-life and that of its monitors.

It is now fact that Ireland's best, most inventive, most well-driven and class-laden pop people come from outside of Dublin.

And most of Dublin's media people, the very honourable exceptions apart (Jim Carroll NME, Alan Carr RTE *Guide*, George Byrne *Hot Press*, David Bell *Dublin Event Guide*) have long since missed the beat. And the boat. You see, bands like *The Intoxicating Rhythm Section* get by simply because they have to. There are no vacant platitudes and there are no lines of however well-intentioned back-slapping nonentities to tell them (falsely) how great they actually are. Similarly so, *Toasted Heretic*, a band with enough arrogance to flood their province but a band who know where they're at and how exactly they've got there.

For those people who still believe that *Something Happens* are the potential saving grace of new Irish pop or that *An Emotional Fish* are actually inventive, then "Cork Rock"



■ THE FOUR HOPS: Cork Band, The Sultans of Ping FC, (from left) Patrick O'Connell, Niall O'Flaherty, Morty McCarthy and John McAuliffe, jumping to it at Sir Henry's last night, where they played during Cork Rock 91, which was sponsored by the Evening Echo and 2FM. Lark By The Lee closes the event today.

## Yes, the record people had to open their cheque books

NIGHT ONE opened up with the mild lunatic fringe and some remarkably flared trousers.

From Bishopstown, *The Frank And Walters* almost conquered all. Nervous, self-conscious and slightly naive, they hit often and in *Fashion Crisis Hits New York* and *Davy Chase*, have two more fine new songs to add to their account. *Never Ending Staircase* has us open-mouthed and

lots of heart.

*The Subterraneans* are one of our most important bands. Reshaped with samples and dance-shapes, *Gameshow* is blindingly good and an entire nation is won over.

*The Intoxicating Rhythm Section* come from Athy. Some James Brown and Kraftwerk steals mix with what we do believe to be Belsonic South bass-lines for a cross cultural mish of beautiful EMF/groove-funk pop. Good fortune is around the very next corner for this band and, as we left, they were discussing big money with the record company kids.

Last band, night one, then is Bird out of Dublin. Singer Shelly is a bomb of intent, an exotic flailing huge voice. Bird are a band of musos with great songs and that, in itself is very rare indeed. We fall on the floor and think about our holidays.

### SATURDAY

Tonight we have even more record company people, all looking for friendly words and little advices. What they get is consistently good, sometimes even great. Eyes and ears will have been opened and cheque books aired.

*The Wishing Stones* from Waterford opened with some soft-pop, five-man guitar jangle and hum. Harmonies gushed, this was a 'nice' band.

*The Brilliant Trees* followed on with two bass-guitars and lots of spinning choruses. The record company people were moved by this semi-La's-ish bite. One chorus smelt of "Enlighten," but we won't gripe.

And then to *A Touch Of Oliver*. This band



■ Gene Russell, bass player with Belsonic sound and Mark Cagney at Sir Henry's.

who have no notion of how good they are. Their *Sundays/Throwing Muses* girl bits and bobs are heavenly — songs like *Nothing Left At All*, *Linger*, *Put Me Down* and *Dreams* are the sound of next year's 'Chart Show.' Tonight everything they touch is golden. We double-check and decide that we haven't been dreaming. We were there.

*The Chelsea Drugstore*, then, are up against it. We're still pop-drunk on *The Cranberries* and aren't moved by this. Here's a well-connected and

# CORK ROCK



they succeed in finding BP Fallon's chest with a