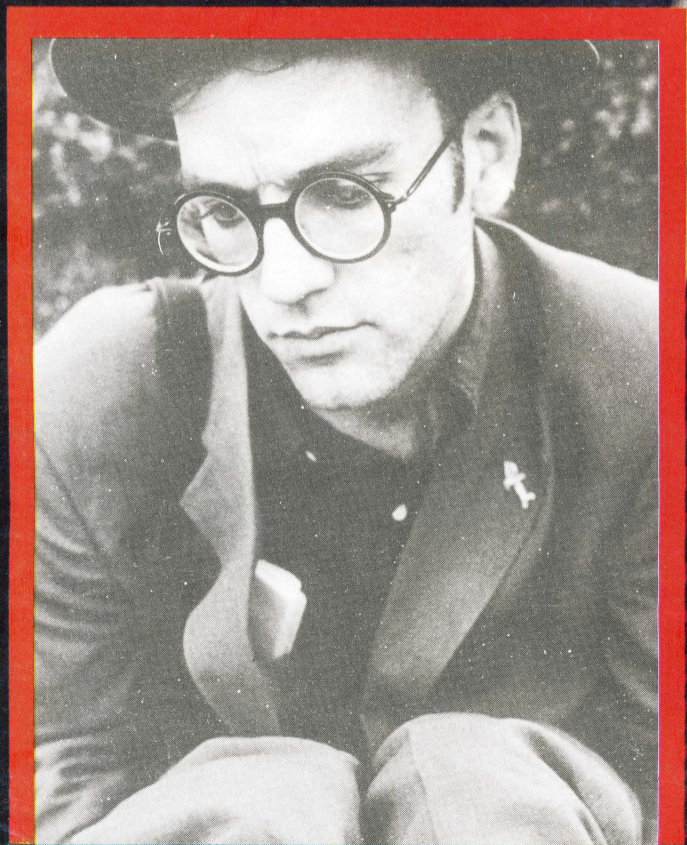


HOT PRESS

PITY THE POOR IMMIGRANT

THE SCANDALOUS TREATMENT OF A CHINESE DISSIDENT IN IRELAND.

REM:STIPE MAKING SENSE



LENIHAN ON TAPE

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

INTERVIEW: JOE JACKSON

deacon blue • ian m_cewan • CARLING/HOT PRESS - FINAL • gloria estefan • 4 idle hands

SHOW TIME

FLEADH-BERGASTING!

FLEADH '91: (Finsbury Park, London)

NO MUD, food that doesn't include botulism as a statutory ingredient and security men that aren't out on day release from Wormwood Scrubs. What's the world coming to when you can't go to a big outdoor festival like Fleadh '91 and spend at least a week afterwards whining about what a thoroughly rotten time you had and how you'll never go again...until next year?

Outside Finsbury Park the only English accents you're likely to hear belong to the wank...er sorry, *enterprising gentlemen* trying to sell you tickets at vastly inflated prices. Inside and the mood is celebratory, 25,000 displaced Paddies gathered together to reaffirm their Irishness and sample the delights of the numerous beer tents dotted around the arena. The Guinness might resemble the water you washed your dirty socks in last night but when you're 400 miles from home even the real thing could hardly taste sweeter.

The music wasn't half bad either with some of the more memorable moments coming early in the day. Despite looking about as comfortable as Ian Paisley at a Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, The Frames managed to win a few new friends with their patented brand of Raggle Taggle. The Dublin six-piece sounded suspiciously like Prefab Sprout on semi-acoustic cuts like "15 Seafort Parade" - which could be read as a compliment in itself - but the rockier "The Dancer" and "You're Wrong" were clearly all their own handiwork.

Tiberius Minnows are young, naive and quite brilliant. They already possess one bona fide pop classic in the form of "Time Files" - and on today's showing I hope they never grow up! The Honey Thieves, on the other hand, needed to mature and they have done, in the process developing into a band of frigid intensity. The gonzoed metallic thrash of "Second Hand Man" and "Jesus Got A Gun" stirred up memories of prime time Iggy & The Stooges and managed to inject a bit of life into a crowd that still seemed to be suffering from a collective hangover.

Open air gigs are never particularly kind to artists who thrive on intimacy which probably explains the somewhat muted response afforded to Mary Black and Mary Coughlan. Christy Moore fared a little better thanks to the irresistible appeal of chestnuts like "Don't Forget Your Shovel" while Nanci Griffith, granted honorary Irish status for the day, had everyone mesmerised with exquisite versions of "Gulf Coast Highway", "You Made Love A Teardrop Ready To Fall" and the brand new "In Spite Of My Sin" which bodes well for her new LP due out in August.

The Sawdoctors were greeted with the first genuine hero's welcome of the day. Their musical merits may be open to debate but you'd have to be a miserable old bastard not to enjoy Tuam's finest live. "I Useta Love Her", "N 17" and the quite ridiculous "Fourth Year Presentation Boarder" all provoked mass outbreaks of communal singing, not to mention a few moist eyes among the Galway contingent. The Felle is their's for the taking!

It should only be a matter of time before The Fat Lady Sings become monstrously huge. Give Nick Kelly's songs room to breathe and they take on dimensions even the vastest of stadiums would be hard pushed to contain. An impassioned "Arc Light" and soulful "Twist" were just two highlights of a set that never failed to delight despite being plagued with more feedback than the entire Jesus & Mary Chain back catalogue.

Few frontmen are quite as imposing as That Petrol Emotion's Steve Mack. Specially decked out for the occasion in knee-length electric blue bermudas, the American singer was a blur of flying dreadlocks and flailing limbs as the band steamrollered their way through a typically explosive performance. New songs like "Big Human Thing", "Infinite Thrill" and "Detonate My Dream" suggest they're planning to take the mutant dance rock which typified "Chemicrazy" and develop it into something even darker and more disturbing. The mind boggles!

In contrast, Van Morrison was obviously quite happy to cruise along on autopilot: I never thought I'd use a word like "perfunctory" to describe "Gloria" and "Bright Side Of The Road" but that's all they were tonight. Incidentally, this disappointing state of affairs wasn't due to any lack of commitment on George Fame's part, the hired hand upstaging the gaffer with a solo "Yeah Yeah" that bobbed and weaved like a prize fighter.

If Van the Man was a disappointment, then The Pogues were an unmitigated disaster. If I want to subject myself to some drunken, out of tune singing, I can always go to my local at closing time. I certainly don't need to fork out £20 for the privilege. On the day, "Dirty Old Town", "If I Should Fall From Grace" and "The Broad Majestic Shannon" were all shadows of their former selves, Shane's voice reduced to the merest whisper and the rest of the lads trying none too convincingly to cover for him. It's sad to have to say it but The Pogues, as they stand now, are a disturbing parody of a once great band - whether they can recover remains to be seen but the omens aren't good.

Hardly a fitting climax to what was a magnificent day but that didn't stop Fleadh '91 restoring my badly bruised faith in festivals. It's just a shame there was no mud to complain about...

• Stuart Clark



1000%

FATIMA MANSIONS: (McGonagles, Dublin)

"IT'S A pleasure to be here - and something of a miracle, no thanks to the British Army." Cathal Coughlan intones deadpan, as Fatima Mansions launch into a blistering "Valley Of The Dead Cars". A packed audience fix their gaze and adoration on the stage which, flanked by painted panels of god/demon figures has an appearance not unlike that of a temple.

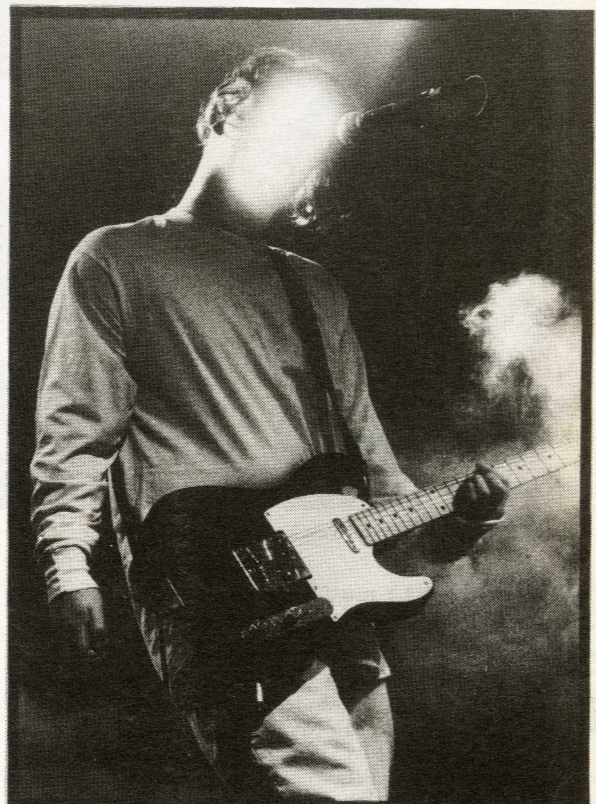
And why not? If any ensemble of musicians is worthy of worship in this day and age it is Fatima Mansions. In an era which is typified by bands content to write one decent song and rearrange it innumerable times to construct a career, they stick out as a band who can write any number of heart-stoppingly good tunes, among them "The Door To Door

Inspector", "Only Losers Take The Bus", "Something Bad..." and, of course, "Viva Dead Ponies".

As ever, Coughlan is the key. He assumes a myriad of personalities throughout the set, ranting and raving one minute, dangerously intense the next, throwing himself around the stage then standing stock still waiting for some unseen force to take control of his body again. Okay, it's a performance, but it's far too real to dismiss as role playing. They encore with "Stigmata" then slip into an incendiary "Blue For Ceausescu" ("Clao, no rescue" - take heed tinpot despots everywhere!).

A draining experience, this show. Fatima Mansions are excellent. Cathal Coughlan is a madman - oh that we could all be so sane!! • Dan Oggly

Pic: Cathal Dawson



Powerful stuff

Pic: Cathal Dawson

LARK BY THE LEE: (The Lee Fields, Cork)

MONDAY AFTERNOON and we're out of doors with some sick looking clouds looming. The Caroline Shout are not to everybody's taste, but they do have a spring in their step and, like them or loathe them, we can't argue with songs like "So She Said" and "Into Your Hands". (Well...I suppose that we can, but let's just leave things for now, eh).

Ian Richards And The Soul Masters have the tallest, thinnest frontman in pop. They've also got a couple of cowboy hats, lots of brass, some party piece songs like "In The Midnight Hour" and go down here incredibly well. Every year.

Kim Carroll is new to all of this. He's this shit-hot, classically-trained piano-playing, guitar-picking, long-haired kid from California via Fermoy who's spanking like the clappers up there. (Indeed! - Harvey Proctor). Tailor made for film scores and indoor sit-downs you'll hear quite a bit about Kim Carroll whether or not you want to. Jerry Fehilly plays drums and the rather brilliantly good Samantha Obernik sings back-ups. Enough said.

The Belsonic Sound are back once again, this time as a five-piece with samples and all manner of strange noises. "Sunshine" comes second in and the sun comes out. And stays out. The Belsonic Sound cook up a tasty square meal of groove funk-pop with lots of loops. This crowd, naturally enough, go completely berserk. Again.

And so to Power Of Dreams, a truly huge band. Fifteen thousand indie kids (almost) rave on to gigantic slabs of guitar pop. Open-mouthed at the metal-ish tinge of "Cancer", the spurious spill of "Never Been To Texas" and the drive of "American Dream". Power Of Dreams are Cork's best ever (adopted) band and they're free to drink in our bars anytime. Fifteen thousand kids cannot possibly be wrong.

• Colm O'Callaghan



Julian: Making girls unhappy

CORK ROCK '91: (Sir Henry's, Cork)

HELLO ONCE again and welcome to Cork Rock. This is three nights of truly remarkable Irish pop and, in years to come, we'll be telling our children that we were there. Naturally they won't believe us but, for the record, we've got shuttle-flights full of record company people. We've got BP Fallon. We've got bulging houses filled with flailing popkids. And we've got The Frank And Walters.

This band are remarkably-flared power-poppers with more hooks than Herrol Graham. "Davy Chase" and "Fashion Crisis Hits New York" have us stomping and BP Fallon is impressed. A band who'll kick you in the teeth. The Precious Stones have lots of denim clothes and some little stadium songs on the back boiler. They're rather clever footballers too and deserve their every luck. The Subterraneans are reborn and revamped and are still stunningly brilliant. They open with "Gameshow", they close with "I Fought The Law" and in between they box clever with groovy pop fists. Take them to the haven of your bed. But keep some space too for The Intoxicating Rhythm Section, the band who once asked U2 to support them at The Baggot Inn. Sampling James Brown (again) and Kraftwerk did them no harm and this funk-laden groove-riff machine had us open-mouthed upfront. Bird follow on, the sound of muso-pop with songs. Rare enough, that. Great voice, bundles of energy and "Sex Control" is amazing.

Night two and we're into overdrive. The Wishing Stones surprise with three-way harmonies and chiming guitar-pop. "Shirley" is a corker. And then The Brilliant Trees appear and play great songs very greatly indeed. They're rather, well...brilliant, in fact. The Cranberries are next and put us all to shame with the most beautiful girl-pop you'll hear all year. "Put Me Down", "Linger" and "Dreams" are the sounds of next year's Chart Show right now and God, how we swoon. A Touch Of Oliver bring a touch of the unexpected to their guitar rambles. "Golden Valley Reserve", "Burn" and "Candy Bottle Green" are spiffing, but we need just a tad more bollocks here and we'd be laughing. And then it's Chelsea Drugstore, playing well-intentioned generic Deacon Blue that's half-clever and slightly out of focus. The kids upfront are disappointed. Put it down to nerves and expectation. I did.

So then to the last night at the fair. Lir continue to divide and conquer. They're doing their own thing and couldn't care less. Azure Days follow with lots of moody pop songs with great tunes. Songs like "Anything For You", "Back Down To Justice" and "World Junk" are pristine and liquid. The girls loved them. Toasted Heretic are utterly amazing. Julian Gough shining with the huge self-belief of young Morrissey. They take this one by the throat and throttle it halfway to delirium. "Galway And Los Angeles" is the best song we've heard all year. Therapy pick it up and chainsaw their way into our bloodstream. They open with "Punishment Kiss" and head-but their way through some psychotic dog-rock trashcore and it's amazing.

Finally, The Sultans Of Ping FC, who have the most incredible underpants in pop. Once in love with football, now in love with sex, this band put the rot back into erotic and kick like hell. Tonight Cork, tomorrow the universe.

Cork Rock, amazingly brilliantly, remarkably beautiful. It could only happen here.

• Colm O'Callaghan



This man is Jesus

THE STUNNING: (Walker's Hotel, Drogheda)

IT'S ONLY a few weeks since myself and about four hundred others failed to gain admittance on The Stunning's first visit to the now-defunct much-loved Boxing Club, so tonight's return trip to Drogheda is definitely an exercise in Keeping The Fans Happy.

Knowing that you are currently one of the biggest-drawing bands in Ireland could make you complacent but on the night The Stunning avoid that accusation with conviction, impressively unveiling some fresh material, which is apparently destined for their second album, due towards the end of the summer. Thus "Angel By Her Side" finds Derek Murray switching from lead guitar to organ with aplomb whilst "Supernatural Thing" sounds like a close relation to "Tight Rope Walker".

Boxing seems to be very influential in The Stunning scheme of things. Apart from the "Heads" video one new songs boasts the line "A fighter's pride is built on fear", while Steve Wall manages to drag religion into it, dedicating "Heads" to our leading local head, St. Oliver Plunkett. Steve is also adept at the time-old tradition of borrowing song titles so that "She's Not There" is about a ghost he knows rather than a Zombie (cryptic, eh?). The build-up is powerful and even though it's their first gig in four weeks, they have no problems winning encores, wheeling on "Hey, Mr. Ginger" and "Turn It On" to reflect a '60s-ish shift in direction.

On tonight's showing they'll have no problems in Ireland for quite a while but internationally The Stunning might just be considered revisionist. The new album could make or break them - and in that context what they need now is a favourable bounce of the ball, an element of luck even...

Wish it to them!
• Gavin Kieran

BJORN AGAIN: (Sandford House, Ranelagh/Leisureland, Galway)

AT FIRST I thought I was dreaming. Nah, this couldn't be happening, I thought, and put the vision down to the side-effects of a particularly virulent bout of food poisoning combined with an unnaturally high intake of mineral water. Why are these people wearing flares, kimonos and thigh-high boots? Why are they speaking in Swedish accents? Why are they playing note-perfect versions of ABBA songs? Why am I dancing?

The answers to these earth-shattering questions were only partly answered on the night, as Björn Again turned a stuffed Sandford House into Pop Paradise for a blissful ninety minutes. Rational thought went the way of the bulk of my food intake for the previous three days as "Waterloo" gave way to the bounteous beat of "Bang A Boomerang" and the eternally effervescent "S.O.S." melded with the jungle jolly-up of "I Am A Tiger".

That ABBA were one of the greatest Pop bands ever to set foot on this underserving little asteroid of ours is beyond doubt, but to hear those songs pounded out in a sweaty pub with love and laughter almost reduced me to a babbling idiot. The daft intros, super-large telephones for "Ring Ring", wide-brimmed hats for "Money Money Money" and the carefully choreographed routines of Frida Longstokin and Agnetha Falstart made this the Pop Experience Of The Year...so far.

So much so, in fact, that two nights later I found myself in Galway for a repeat dose. Unfortunately, those readers who've followed my adventures in the pages of *Hot Press* will doubtless be aware of The Curse which follows me - albatross-like - around the country, and tonight it was Björn Again's turn to suffer. A mere twenty-seven people crammed into Leisureland for the full-scale Björn Again experience, a *Bryne-fide* disaster in other words. And yet...

Taking our cue from the spirit of The Blitz, we twenty-seven brave souls stormed to the front, placed our coats on the floor and proceeded to dance around them, while Björn Again battled bravely to bring some badly needed glitz'n glamour to this far-flung outpost of Pop. As an event it was tremendous, as the stadium-quality lights framed the exotic quarter in those perfect poses and we danced...oh, how we danced.

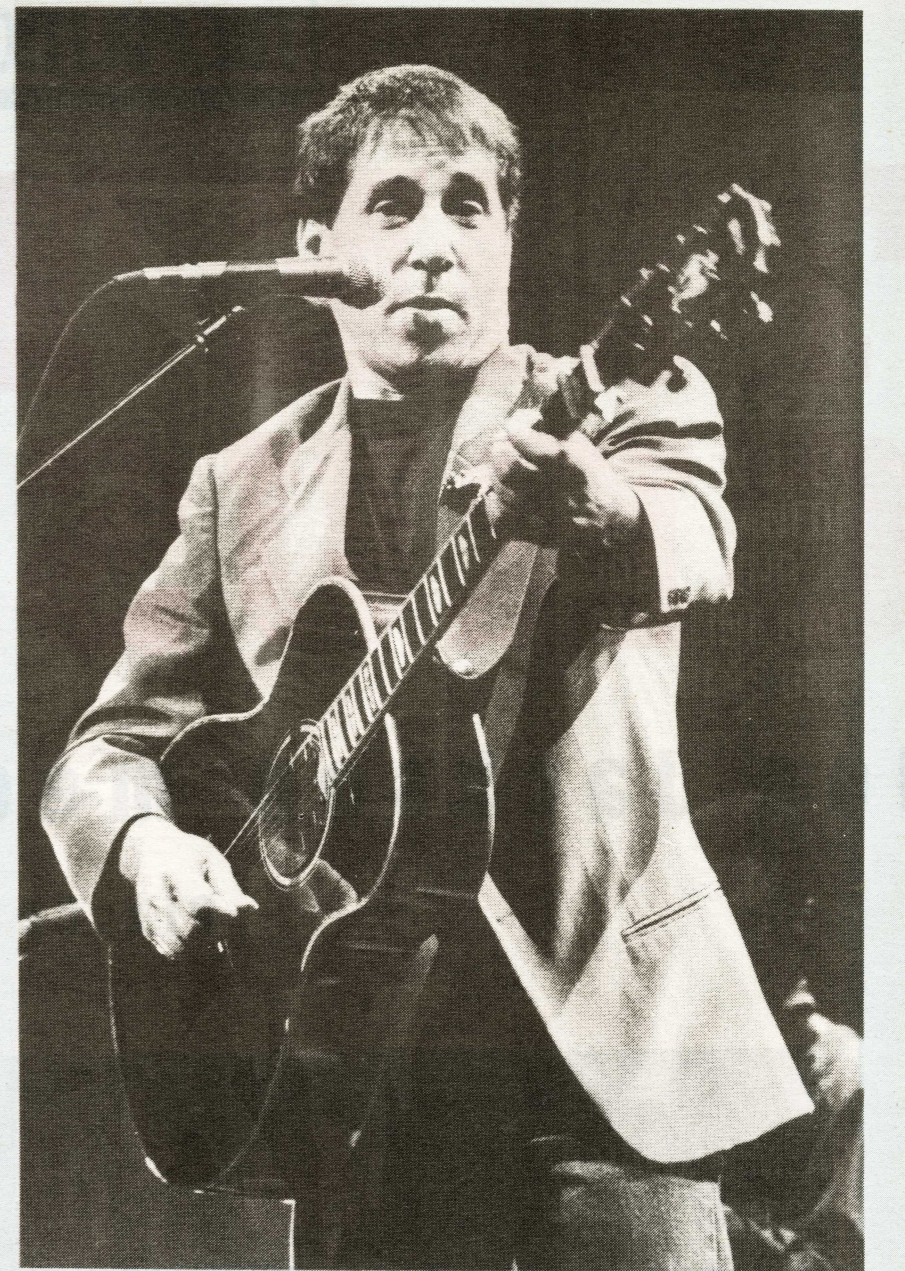
If you've never seen an entire audience mimic the routine for "Ring Ring" in a cavernous ballroom then you haven't lived. Like Christmas except earlier, like snow except whiter, like money except cheaper...this was art and orgasm fused in one fantastic lollipop.

The sparklers we held during "Fernando" may now only be so much copper-wire and burnt-out carbon...but The Flame of Björn Again will burn forever. And I think I can safely speak for the other twenty-six Pop patriots in Galway when I say: "Björn Again...Thank You For The Music."

• George Byrne

INSPIRAL CARPETS: (National Stadium, Dublin)

WE MAY be small in number but we have impeccable taste. Tonight's turnout is pathetic, my countrymen and women it appears, more interested in 'ed in examinations and nights by the fire than an evening of undiluted pop thrills. Is Maths Paper One more important than an opportunity to jump up and down and bellow like cows at a bunch of guys bearing musical instruments? I think not.



Call him Paul

PAUL SIMON: (RDS, Dublin)

THE MAN beside me is a leading light in the Ballincollig Jazz Society. He's here because he's a big fan of "Brazilian free-form percussion".

The group in front of me consists of an elderly couple and their three pre-teen grandchildren. To my right, there are two young men wearing tasteful RDS headbands and cut-off T-shirts, their every gesture unleashing great tidal waves of cider-arama. This particular duo's speciality is the dance that Chevy Chase did in the "You Can Call Me Al" video, a routine which they perform with ever-increasing clumsiness as the night progresses.

A Paul Simon audience is a broad church. With a career spanning four decades, this is hardly surprising. But what is surprising is the all-pervasive 'family-outing' feel of this crowd in the RDS. Especially, when you consider that, of late, Simon has become more musical ethnographer than entertainer. Remember his "Graceland" show when, with only a couple of concessions, he refused to play any of his old stuff and concentrated instead on using his set as a giant South African music showcase.

That performance did feature some priceless moments - but it also bored the arse off a lot of people...

Tonight was different. This was a full scale Paul Simon concert with a heavy helping of the hits that brought these toddlers and grannies together in the first place. To raucous screams of approval, he and the band delivered vigorously re-impolstered versions of "Bridge Over Troubled Water", "Cecilia", "Totem Pole", "Homeward Bound", "Still Crazy After All These Years", "Me And Julio", Late In The Evening" and an encore of "Sound Of Silence" and "The Boxer" that was as light and cosy as a duvet.

The spine of the concert, however, was made up of material from "Graceland" and "The Rhythm Of The Saints". Here, the band which included a half-dozen Brazilian percussionists really cut loose, re-inventing many of the songs and playing with a sure-handed restraint that belied their ferocity. The percussionists were a sideshow in themselves, flailing about the place and walloping on a whole orchestra of found objects from gourds to sheets of metal to instruments which closely resembled bright-green onion sacks. All of this provided a cinematic

rhythmic backdrop against which Simon with the assistance of the other players splashed his characteristic day-glo melodies and crazy-paving lyrics.

Some of the more muted songs from "The Rhythm Of The Saints" (particularly "Born At The Right Time" and "She Moved On") were given a more flashy, loose-limbed treatment which probably made them more accessible for the uninitiated. There were also great versions of "The Boy In The Bubble", "Diamonds On The Soles Of Their Shoes" and, for some reason, two versions of "You Can Call Me Al".

It wasn't a complete triumph, however. The RDS acoustics as usual did their best to foul up proceedings, and succeeded on a number of occasions. There was also an ill-considered fifteen minute barrage of instrumental improvisation half-way through the show which allowed Simon to go backstage to change his toupee or whatever. The man from Ballincollig might have enjoyed it but I certainly didn't.

Ultimately though, this was a show for all the family that delivered exactly what it promised. The fact that about fifty people were still singing "The Boxer" outside Paddy Cullen's at 1am attests to that.

• Liam Fay

You disappoint me.

Anyway the carpet band with two marvellous LPs and a reputation for lights like you've never seen 'em before live excellence deserve more than this. But they still come on and play like Matthew, bless their little hearts. "She Comes In The Fall" is first and crap. "Grip" is second and finer than the weather we're currently enjoying. From there on in it's across the board fire and

brimstone and treacle, great songs played perfectly and sung by probably the finest singer since me before my voice broke. That said, although tonight is flawless and genuinely exciting the overall mood is one of muted disappointment, one which I share.

This is because we all expected a repeat of last April's McGonagles happening, a show where I danced so vigorously that my head and shoulders ached for a full week

afterwards. We expected half the weight of our bodies to disappear in clouds of steam, we expected apparitions and miracles and sore throats in the morning, we expected next week's Lotto numbers carved in tablets of stone.

But what the heck, they gave us five and I'm happy, so you still should've been there. I hope you fall

• Michael O'Hara