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views and reviews on the local scene



● The Cranberries - big show on Sunday.

Berry good!

Preview Special

MUCH talked about indie sensations **The Cranberries** are in Tamworth this weekend as part of a British tour in support of their second single and forthcoming debut album.

The exciting prospects headline at Tamworth Arts Centre on Sunday night in the latest of the venue's impressive line-up of October gigs.

The foursome from Limerick in the West of Ireland are once again being raved about by the music press after the initial hype died away. The LP is called 'Everyone Else is Doing It, Why Can't We?' and the single 'Dreams' came out at the end of September.

MUSICBOX has heard a copy of 'Dreams' and the track promises a concert that will be genuinely different. Singer Delores O'Riordan has a delicate, fragile voice but it combines well with music that isn't half as weedy. 'Dreams' has a strong, memorable, melody that manages to support rather than smother Delores' singing.

Now signed to Island Records, The Cranberries first emerged with 'Nothing Left At All' - a demo on cassette form which sold well in Ireland. By

the time their debut EP 'Uncertain' was released, expectations were already high.

Liverpool band **Mr Ray's Wig World**, featuring Tamworth's Rob Cross, are set to be part of an as-yet unconfirmed supporting cast.

Over at Rockwells on Sunday, rock band **Meltdown** are the main band with support coming from unashamed **Black Sabbath** rip-offs **Black Sabbath**. Meltdown recently supported Stressex at a gig in Lichfield and featured in the Rathole's rock night on Sunday.

Sabbath, initially performing

as a one-off, will be doing **Black Sabbath** covers but say they are a traditional heavy metal band with 90s values. They say they're looking forward to the gig and if it proves popular, they'll do some more.

Thursday's entertainment at Rockwells is a three-band show involving **Bigmouth**, **Slabcake** and **The Where**. Slabcake were among the highlights of this year's rock festival and current holders of the Battle of the Bands title. Their good reputation has grown outside the town, and this is unmissable chance to see them in action again.



● Slabcake - in action on Thursday.

The line-up changed but we're not short-changed!

WE have two major local reviews for you this week. First a review sent in by Peter Bishop, of Glascoate Heath, who went to the Rathole show which was due to feature Stressex, Tanglefoot, and Kinky Machine recently. Amazingly ALL three bands pulled out in the days leading up to the gig but promoter John Reeman ensured that a show did go on by recruiting Swivel, Suzi Suicide, and Crazy Beat Demons. Swivel is the new name used by Leadbone since their first gig. Anyway on with Peter's excellent report...

Swivel/Suzi Suicide/Crazy Beat Demons - The Rathole

After feeling initially a bit cheated to find that the three bands advertised in the Herald weren't playing and had been replaced with three completely different ones, I decided that I might as well go in to save a wasted journey.

Unfortunately a lack of petrol prevented me from seeing the whole of Swivel's set. I did catch the last couple of songs and was impressed by the quality of their material. There are some references to Nirvana in their sound but they are much more diverse than most of the Nirvana-clones seen of late. Definitely a promising band that the indie pop kids will love in their thousands.

Sardonic humour is prevalent throughout Suzi Suicide's set. "This is our last gig," announces the singer with a wry grin. "hope you enjoy it." From the powerful, politically-orientated 'Class War' to the Nirvana-influenced noise of 'Let it Burn' Suzi Suicide display guitar riffs that taste like The Clash, Sex Pistols, and (dare I say it) Guns n' Roses. The punk-injected guitar is the perfect balance to the socially aware lyrics heard in 'Dead at 16' and the topical 'Failed America'. "I don't want to pledge myself to the United States of Europe," spits the singer complete with mock salute. Each song is delivered with an emotion and intensity rarely seen at a local venue. All action Steve Jones-alike guitarist is the perfect partner to the amusingly arrogant frontman. Suzi Suicide's enthusiasm is also evident in their image and attitude. They were the only band of the night who made the effort to talk to us but this soon degenerated into insults when the crowd failed to react to what was being said. Their honesty and ability to laugh at themselves is admirable if a little dangerous. "Here's some more of our punk pastiche," introduces the final song. All too soon their set is over. I expected them to be obnoxious and trying to be something they weren't but I found them to be humorous, explosive, and very entertaining. Go 'em, if they play again.

The Crazy Beat Demons were magnificently average. They failed

to create the same excitement with their seven plus members that the previous bands created with their three. They started well and certainly have some strong songs but they lacked the passion of Swivel and the presence of Suzi Suicide. The use of bongo drums and other percussion creates a distinctive sound that only they are producing. The Beat Demons problem lies not in their music but in their delivery. On a reggae track they introduced a different vocal which was a nice touch but the effect was ruined when the man stepped off the stage and turned his back on the audience, alienating us from the proceedings. More energy and a shorter set would greatly improve this dance-orientated band and probably convince me to agree with Sean's recent ravings.

All in all a good indication of the talent in Tamworth. Review by Peter Bishop.

Power Craze/Free and Ezee - Rockwells

I'd been looking forward to seeing my favourite blues band Smith and Jones again and it was a big disappointment when I found out they'd had to pull out of this show. Power Craze, from Burton, opened and worked their way through a decent enough set which was marred by a cover of 'Anarchy in the UK' - more based on the Megadeth re-working than the Pistols original and lacking any sort of passion or anger. Their set varied noticeably between soft rock and the more thrashy type, but their experience showed, particularly their frontman who looked uncomfortable at times as he introduced songs.

Free and Ezee were much, much, better in terms of musicianship and they are fronted by a man who really proved himself as an excellent singer. Their own material was more bluesy rock than metal which, while not setting the place alight, was undeniably good quality and was well-received by the rock fans present. My only moan is that the set was liberally sprinkled with covers of rock classics. Whereas the other band had just dropped in a couple of covers, Free and Ezee ploughed through 'old favourites' like The Black Crowes, Iron Maiden, Georgia Satellites, and Black Sabbath. They were all executed very well and I have a soft spot for bands that do the odd cover, but I don't see why they had to mix their perfectly good originals with a Working Men's Club-style set of golden oldies.

The highlight came when Dave Smith, of Smith and Jones, accepted an invitation to join the band on stage and perform a blues number. The informal get-together resulted in a stormingly powerful blues song which was so full of feeling that I got so wrapped up in it, I didn't realise it had been going on for ages. The format of the song indicated it could go on forever and with Smith and his 'backing band' in such good form, I wouldn't have minded if it did. Review by Sean Atkins

Mark's estranged

INFLUENTIAL musician Mark Mortimer has parted company with The Strangeloves and is actively working on getting a new band together.

The bass player and songwriter blamed a poor attitude within the band for his decision to quit. The group had not played in Tamworth since their appearance in a big five-band show at the Assembly Rooms in May.

"There was a lack of enthusiasm and a wallowing around doing nothing, and going nowhere. We seemed to be running around in circles," said Mark.

"I had been confused about our direction as well, I must admit. We had not played since May and we have been without a name since hearing of another band called The Strangeloves."

Despite commitments with the Network label Mark is still looking to pursue his own musical career asked good singers interested in working with him to get in touch on 021-766 7311.



● Mark Mortimer.

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WEEKEND BREAK

Blue Ice (15) Michael Caine and Sean Young star in a brittle thriller about a former MI6 operator now running a jazz club, who unwittingly becomes involved in a series of killings that have nothing to do with spying.

Carry On Columbus (PG) The 'Carry On' team try to discover America. Naive gags by the handful. Some of the old regulars are joined by comedians of a more radical school of humour. Laugh, I thought I'd never start. Could this be the last gasp in the long-running series?

City of Joy (15) Patrick Swazey as a young American doctor adrift in India, helps the slum dwellers of Calcutta to find a spark of humanity. A long and powerful epic that stimulates the emotions and uplifts the senses. Pauline Collins is splendid as an 'angel of mercy'.

Howard's End (PG) A first-class screen adaptation of E. M. Forster's classic Edwardian novel. A brilliant performance by Emma Thompson as an independent woman who influences the Wilcox family. Directed by James Ivory.

Patriot Games (15) Harrison Ford plays an ex-CIA agent holidaying in England with his wife and daughter. Sight-seeing outside Buckingham Palace, Ford goes in like John Wayne and shoots his way through a would-be IRA assassin, and is directly responsible for the capture of the dead man's brother (Sean Bean). But that's just the beginning.

California Man (PG) The stone age meets the rock age, when two high school outcasts, Sean Astin and his best friend (Pauli Shore) unearth a frozen caveman (Brendan Fraser) while excavating a backyard pool. The preserved prehistoric person turns everyday life upside down in upscale Encino, California.

Unforgiven (15) Clint Eastwood is back in the saddle in a terrific new western. Eastwood plays a former outlaw and killer, who is asked to form a vigilante group to



● Michael Caine and Sean Young in 'Blue Ice'.

SPOTLIGHT BY ANTHONY SHERRATT

avenge the brutal assault on a prostitute in the town of Big Whiskey; when he confronts the corrupt sheriff (a magnificently evil performance by Gene Hackman). Eastwood also produces and directs this stark drama about life in the American West of the last century. Outstanding.

A League Of Their Own (PG) Penny Marshall's superb new movie set in the 1940s, about the formation of the first female baseball league. Tom Hanks, Geena Davis and Madonna, sparkle in a high-spirited and very entertaining comedy-drama.

Housekeeper (PG) Steve Martin is Newton Davis who builds his dream house and has no intentions of sharing it. Enter Goldie Hawn as Gwen. She takes Newton on an emotional ride and then decides to move in, and unwittingly turns a romantic 'house' into comic chaos.

Lethal Weapon 3 (15) Mel Gibson and Danny Glover are back again in Richard Donner's latest action-packed edition of the adventures of two Los Angeles homicide cops. Slam-bang action all the way with 'patter' to match. Don't miss it!

Ferngully (U) A splendid feature-length animated musical that enters a magical world touched by magic and surrounded by adventure, and

also packs a strong 'green world' message.

Beethoven (U) Riotous story of the havoc wreaked by a gigantic, but lovable, St Bernard - 13 stone of love, devotion, courage and drool!

Peter Pan (U) Walt Disney's splendid animated version of the boy who wouldn't grow up. The spirit of his imagination has remained timeless.

STOP PRESS: Beauty and the Beast! A special paid preview of Disney's Oscar-winning feature. Saturday at 6.50pm and 9pm. Price: adults £2.75; children £1.95.

Saturday Morning Film Club (admission £1.20): **Brave Little Toaster (U)** Animated feature; **Suburban Commando (PG)** start time 12.30pm.

The Director's Chair (Monday 7.30pm): 'Ben Hur' (PG) A spectacular and lavish classic starring Charlton Heston in the title role. A high point in the chariot race, with Ben Hur competing against a villain played by Stephen Boyd. William Wyler's epic won ten Oscars.

UCI Midnight Express (Saturday) Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer (18).

The power of power

The Strangers - Wolverhampton Civic Hall.

And what a glorious, glorious night this was - the night when The Strangers re-discovered their rock and roll roots. Over the past few years The Strangers have been serving up enjoyable somewhat light-hearted live shows which occasionally verged on cabaret but now, with their new line up, they have re-found their old energy, grit and that famous and wicked vicious streak. Thus, although we are still served several sedate, seductive gems like 'Strange Little Girl', 'Heaven Or Hell' and the spellbinding 'Always The Sun' the recurring theme of the new Strangers live act is POWER. Old classics like 'No More Heroes', 'Five Minutes', 'The Raven', 'London Lady', 'Sometimes' and 'Toller On The Sea' have rarely (if ever) sounded better and boosted by classic newbies like the brilliant new single 'Sugar Bullets', the atmospheric 'Time To Die' and the stylish 'Laughing At The Rain' the whole emphasis is on quality and FUN. This is never more apparent than in the wild and crazy encore which brings together classic pogo-a-gogo tracks like 'Five Minutes', 'Duchess', 'Heroes' and even 'Go Buddy Go' in a finale that sent the Wolverhampton audience into a frenzy.

Roberts were wiped out totally by this show as he looked to be a perfect part of the overall Strangers jigsaw and endeared himself to the men and women in black by diving into the audience on several occasions thus living up to the name of the band's new record label - Psycho!!!!!!

Overall then, the whole night was one long smile and as a fellow Tamworthian Strangers-mut Martin said to me afterwards - 'The Strangers are back!'. You better believe it - back and BRILLIANT. Sam Holliday.

*Memo to Rich Hartley - come back to the MIB Rich, they are missing you!!!

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