

Mike Ryan

Ray Fean



"ALL I KNOW IS I'M HUNGRY" - TUESDAY BLUE HEAD OFF TO THE LAND OF THE CHEESBURGER!

VOLUME TO THE MAX!

IT'S NICE to see the Irish charts overflowing with homegrown talent and it's not all Big Tom, Daniel O'Donnell or The Wolfe Tones either! The Irish contemporary music scene has never been healthier and The Observer's scintillating, potentially prize-winning Volume To The Max! column is designed to reflect this happy state of affairs. If you're in a band, however humble, make sure you supply us with details of up and coming gigs and demos you have for review purposes. You never know - it could be your first rung up the long ladder of rock success!

RECORDS

Galway's THE STUNNING have released one of the strongest debut singles I've heard in a long while. The jingly jangly, country-flavoured "Got To Get Away" (Solid Records) has long been a stage favourite and translates perfectly to vinyl. The rest of their live set is more rock orientated and the biggest compliment I can pay The Stunning is that they don't sound like any other band - no mean feat in this day and age!

BURNING EMBERS from Cork, fronted by mainstay Sean O'Neill, go from strength

to strength with every release and their third single "Sweet Little Lady" (Sulan Records) is well-crafted pop with an infectious hook a mile long. The lyrics are a bit on the banal side but the clean, crisp production should guarantee much needed airplay and record company interest on both sides of the Irish Sea.

You can check out The Stunning and Burning Embers live at Limerick's premier rock venue The Cartwheel Bar on August 20th and 13th respectively - NOT to be missed.

THE FOUNTAINHEAD'S recent "Voice Of Reason" album (China Records) has been criminally ignored by punters and media alike despite boasting some of the tastiest pop-rock you're going to hear this side of Christmas. The first single, the mighty "Someone Like You", only made the smallest of dents on the charts but the new 45 "Angel" might just remedy the situation. It's a powerful, brooding cut with soaring guitars and a powerful drum backbeat. Apparently, the Dublin band are making some headway in the States, so let's hope they find the kind of success they deserve.

I understand the long-awaited vinyl outings from THE O'MALLEYS and TOUCANDANCE are already in the pipeline and should hopefully launch both bands onto the international

scene. The O'Malleys are weighing in with a full blown LP while Toucandance test the water a little more cautiously with a single and "Tribalised" seems to be the most likely choice of 'A' side.

THE FLEADH COWBOYS have recruited MARY COUGHLAN for their new "Hardcore Hotel" single (EMI) and it's a potential combination. Country and Irish with tongue planted firmly in cheek!

SCULLION take everyone by surprise with a delightful pop/folk hybrid "Cooler At The Edge" (Grapevine). A nice, dreamy acoustic number with plenty of crossover appeal.

IN CONCERT

WILLIE RYAN AND FRIEND have made a couple of low-key appearances at The Cartwheel recently and despite bags of technical talent aren't really suited to a live environment. Their long, complex songs are jammed with interesting ideas and concepts - just the kind of stuff that would be lapped up by the sophisticated Compact Disc brigade - but a lot of the subtleties are lost on stage.

I'd love to hear Willie's music at two or three in the morning, headphones superglued to my head and a bottle of Smirnoff close at hand. His skilful guitar playing immediately reminded me of Mark Knopfler and a couple of songs could have been outakes from The Dire Straits' "Brothers In Arms" session. His "friend" Aidan conjured up some warm, mellow synth-accompaniment and these guys should be set loose in a top flight studio as soon as possible.

BRAT are a hotly-tipped Dublin four piece with loads of energy and a knack for writing decent tunes. They're struggling hard to find their own identity, the current range of influences is pretty mind-boggling, but they still came up with a set filled to the brim with quirky, commercial pop. Their roots are firmly planted in the late seventies and Brat remind me at times of bands like Squeeze and Beatle-soundalikes The Knack - no bad thing! The shared lead vocals and clever arrangements, often dispensing with drums altogether, set them apart from many of their contemporaries and warmed up a rather lacklustre Cartwheel crowd. Highlights included show-opener "How Do You Do?", the venomous Jam-like "Shipyard Town" and piece de resistance "She's Such A Lady" which had "HIT" written through it like a stick of rock! Brat are young and raw, they really need to find a proper direction, but there's enough potential there to develop into something special.

THE CARTWHEEL Bar on a blustery Thursday is a far cry from the bright lights of, say, The Madison Square Garden but that's just the kind of transition EMI America are hoping Tuesday Blue will make in the next couple of years.

Certainly, a lot of well informed people are putting their money on the band breaking free of the domestic scene and following the likes of U2, Hothouse Flowers and Cry Before Dawn onto the international stage. But are Tuesday Blue equipped for major success and do they belong in the illustrious company of their more established contemporaries?

Their recent set of "farewell" concerts at The Cartwheel, designed as a warm-up for their extensive Stateside tour, suggest the band are going to give it their best shot and the rest will be in the lap of the gods or, more accurately, the record buying public!

The current set, split fairly evenly between established favourites and new material, displays a sense of musical maturity only hinted at in previous performances. The first encore, the semi-acoustic "Who's Your Best Friend", was a perfect example, with Mike Ryan's beautiful, poignant words and the stark musical backdrop combining to make a genuinely moving song. I can already see those arms swaying in the American stadiums! Ryan has developed into a charismatic frontman and when he wandered through the crowd during the atmospheric "Between The Smiles And The Tears", lantern in hand, it was an elating experience.

Tuesday Blue also know how to work a crowd, as the audience participation in the anthemic "I Believe In You" ably demonstrated. Ryan, with his boundless energy and Muppet-style drummer Ray Fean, knocking merry hell out of his kit, are the visual mainstays with the other three content to flesh out their tight, profession sound.

Both sides of their debut Mother single, "Tell The Boys" and "Tunnel Vision", were played early on in the set and the lads must have found it gratifying that new songs like the melancholy "Questions" received an equally enthusiastic response.

It was a well-paced performance with "One Of Those People" and "Soul Of My Soul", played here for the first time, among the other highlights. Tuesday Blue are a well above average modern rock band and, with the future success will depend largely on luck and proper management. After all, equally promising

August and make visits to all the major centres like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. After that we'll have to wait and see how the record takes off and plan from there. We might play college gigs and clubs in our own right or join up with a larger band as support on their own tour. It all depends. I haven't

Stuart Clarke.

bands like In Tua Nua and Cactus World News have failed to make any significant headway on the international market despite considerable popularity at home.

I do have one nagging worry - are they visually stimulating enough to make an impact in a video-orientated market like the States? It's a question I put to Tuesday Blue's drummer Ray Fean: "Video is very important and especially in America with things like MTV. We're due to do a full shoot on August 2nd, 3rd and 4th with some very experienced people and we're excited about that. They're flying in from New York, so I hope it works out. So far, we've only done home-produced stuff for people like RTE but we realise the importance more these days and really want to get our act together in this department. As for the we we look - we seem pretty imagless to anyone in Ireland but in the States, funnily enough, the very lack of visual impact is seen as an image in itself. I guess we have a "non-image" like The Smiths and other similar bands. There's plenty of character within the band, the music certainly has character but we might have problems with the clothes, we'll just have to wait and see".

It's obviously important to remember you've been signed by EMI in America and product will be released on their Manhattan label. The States will start off as your main market place, ho do you intend to crack such a massive country? "We've already released a four track E.P. there as a kind of sampler for the album. It actually came out at the start of July and features re-recorded versions of "Tell The Boys" and "Tunnel Vision" plus the new single "Love Me Simple" and "Cut And Dry". So far, it's only been sent out to college radio but the reaction has been great, really encouraging. We're planning to go over for a promotional tour in mid-

even been to the States before, so I'll listen to the record company.

Our music has always been geared more towards the American market for some reason. The LP is slightly different and they're meant to be different! It's what we do live translated and modified a little onto vinyl and we're happy with the result. The producer Dave Richards really helped us, I enjoyed working with him. Now we know what we're doing in the studio a bit more, I'd like to take a few weeks recording and mixing our next album. I think all the best records are done in a shorter space of time, it also gives you a tighter attitude when it comes to playing live.

The album's called "Shibumi", which is quite an old word and the title of a book too. It basically means "in pursuit of excellence" and that's pretty much our philosophy. Do what you do with conviction and always strive to get better".

Did you enjoy your recent string of gigs in Limerick? "They gave us a lot of confidence - there were loads of flaws in all The Cartwheel gigs - but it gave us the reassurance that we could play well live after a long absence and I felt

we got better each week. Tuesday Blue's big problem is that we never giggered enough in the past. We were always gearing everything to the album, we weren't actually in a position to get out of Limerick and play extensively. That'll soon be remedied though! That's why we don't mind our relative lack of coverage at home, we've never really chased the market here or tried to create any kind of hype. We don't expect big write-ups in the Hot Press. We feel confident at the moment because of the feedback we're getting from the record company, EMI are really giving it a push and they seem so pleased with the L.P. now it's actually in their hands. Hopefully their enthusiasm will catch the radio stations' attention. Don't get me wrong by the way, we want to do well in Europe too and we'll be working hard on that, especially in Ireland. We'll play here when we get the chance".

How do you feel about leaving Limerick? "Limerick is so important to us, it's everything really. It's what we've based ourselves on, where we're coming from and what inspired us. Limerick keeps our feet on the ground, you can't walk down O'Connell Street without seeing someone you know or grew up with. There are so many people genuinely interested in the band but there's no nonsense from them, they tell you what they think. Once you loose touch with reality you're finished".

Knock 'em dead lads! Tuesday Blue, generous to a fault, have promised to rummage through their closets and find some goodies for VOLUME TO THE MAX! readers. We're not sure at this point what they'll actually find but here's your chance to win it/them nonetheless!

Tuesday Blue's first record was released in Ireland on the Mother Label. Which famous Irish band run Mother? Answers please to VOLUME TO THE MAX! Limerick Observer O'Connell Street.

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NEWS

I'm delighted to hear plans are afoot to set-up a Limerick's musicians' workshop/co-op. A similar group in Galway has already done wonders for the city's music scene, providing a permanent live venue, rehearsal space and a full p.a. system. A string of young bands have mushroomed up around the centre and they recently organised a successful showcase in Eyre Square. It's an excellent way to nurture local talent, so go for it!

LUKA BLOOM, a thinly-veiled disguise for seasoned Irish muso Barry Moore, played The Cartwheel a short while ago, and used the gig to showcase much of the new "Luka Bloom" album (Mystery Records). Barry/Luka recently played support on The Pogues' Stateside tour

and looks set for a return visit in September to consolidate his position. The LP itself has been largely ignored at home but is a fine, moody collection of guitar-dominated rock.

Make a note in your diary about the BLACK VELVET BAND, stablemates of the ever-improving Hothouse Flowers, who make a rare Limerick appearance at The Cartwheel on August 27th. Also look out for local Limerick band UP THE DOWNSTAIRS, a kind of funky Smiths/The The hybrid, who sound really impressive for such a new group! Also due soon in The Cartwheel are "lads most likely to" BIG NOISE and SWIM.

Remember, till next month, it's VOLUME TO THE MAX!

CLANCYS

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My selection is _____

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