

Other Wave



been getting its undies Rock, another new quietly emerging

Words: Vivien Goldman
Pix: David Hill, Paul Canty
and Dennis Morris



Riza's off adjoining tables, chatting up mid-week encounters vigorously, fighting at the bar. People are ranged around a mini-stage in front of the pool table, chatting in a desultory way. Then — a hush, as four teenage girls climb onstage under the canopy, settling guitars comfortably across budding chests.

Painted Lady are in the middle of a season of Tuesday and Thursday dates at the Castle, and unquestionably they've got the crowd sewn up. Wild applause greets favourite numbers in the selection of rock evergreens the band whip out energetically —

'Knocking On Heaven's Door', 'Hey Joe', 'Can't Get Enough', 'All Right Now', 'You Keep Me Hanging On' . . . The band's second set of the night ends with a bang after an hour-long set that shows with a level of mutual sympathy and competence that surprises, considering they've only been together for three months.

Kim, short and lean, with a cascade of pre-Raphaelite brown curls surrounding a cheeky pointed face, did the links and intros. What she licked in polish she made up for in natural charm. Tina is a dramatically

untypical drummer, visually a genteel dainty blonde, looks as if she's more at home eating cucumber sandwiches with the crust cut off than drumming in a rock 'n' roll band. Sitting determinedly upright on her stool, she drums primly, toying with the sticks rather than battering the skins into submission. But she's always there with the right fill at the right moment, rock-steady. Her astonished look of ladylike gratification at successfully completing a flourishing roll (as if she hadn't known she'd do it right) is a gem.

The whole band are competent, Enid's robust frame swaying sensuously to each bass line. Kim's rhythm chattering effectively, but Deirdre's lead guitar is a revelation. When she launched into her first solo, Dennis and I shot each other meaningful glances. Authoritative, melodic lines slash decisively through the sound. Her guitar tone is full and rich, ringing exultantly. This woman has got it.

After the set we straggle into the back yard, the girls brushing off eager offers from a stream of males, and climb into the group van.

Kim's folks bought it for them, and her Telecaster. They're unusually supportive. Mrs. McAuliffe executing delirious five spins and reels to 'the band's rockin' rhythms was a joy to watch.

Firstly, the band has one weak spot in the vocals. None of them has a particularly outstanding voice, although Enid is fine when she takes her attention away from playing bass. Dennis and I agree that a powerful lead singer would catapult the whole band to new heights. They say it's been suggested before, they'll consider it. Hope they do, 'cos until then Painted Lady won't achieve their undoubted potential.

"People said, oh, girls can't do anything," says Enid, "which

made us want to prove that we can . . ."
Deirdre the feminist of the band (she's also a member of Jam Today) states, "There's two different kinds of women bands. Either together for a gimmick, or else as a statement. This band has mixed views . . ."
But they certainly agree about

JAM TODAY

Deirdre Cartwright, lead guitar; Frankie Greene, drums; Alison Rayner, bass; Terry Hunt, rhythm guitar; Corinne Liensol, trumpet; Angele Voltmeijer, sax and flute; Jo, keyboards; Diana Wood, vocals.

The gym (at least it looks like a gym) downstairs at the Ladbroke Hall, North London Poly, is packed full of the Alternative Society. It's a Squatters Benefit, featuring Jam Today and the Derelicts, the two top community bands, and everybody's hot to trot.

The audience is predominantly gay; sisters hugging sisters with the determined, almost self-consciously upfront demonstrativeness of those who banged the closest door shut behind them long ago.

Jam Today play an interesting set, notable for the horn section's jazz/funk feel overlaying the basic rock base. Frankie and Jo on drums and piano/organ are in specially good form tonight. Women in the audience cheer as Diana dedicates a song to them. The mood is strictly solidarity. Deirdre Cartwright plays a series of stunning lead solos, as you would expect, fluid, luminous, Sanatan-esque musical moments. After the set we retire to a convenient staircase, and all nine of us sprawl on the cold steps.

Jam Today, as they explained it, are determined to function

their music. Painted Lady got this pub season together by simply walking in off the street and asking. Women, it can be done . . . "When we started the audience was booing and taking the mickey, but they booked us back. The audience was dancing before we left." Why just rock covers?



independently of the conventional music biz male-oriented structure. Some members of the band would like to play to women-only audiences all the time; they don't like men helping them with their instruments. They say they only want to record for a woman-controlled company, like Olivia Records in the States. They're all very aware of the responsibilities of being an all-woman band: "We'd like to have discussions with women after each set."

Individual quotes got lost in a cheerfully rowdy free-for-all discussion, with lots of teasing and jovial interruptions. The band started up with the members at vastly different stages of musical proficiency. They practiced on familiar rock songs, changing lyrics they considered sexist.

The second verse of 'One Of

"We're working on our own material, and we do play a couple of our own numbers. But really we play what we know people want to hear. We might want to do more complicated stuff, but the audience wouldn't appreciate it. They might like us to play more commercial stuff, but we wouldn't enjoy it . . ."



These Nights' by the Eagles, for example: "I've been looking for an angel . . . the daughter of the devil . . . became friends that we could trust, lovers that would let us be ourselves, women that would feel the same . . ."

The band range in age from 18 to 28. They're concerned with developing a form of music that's specifically women's: "I think the group is moving from rock to a funkier kind of thing. We'd never play cock-rock, but we don't think women have to stick to traditional acoustic music either."

They were particularly concerned that any women who read *SOUNDS* should know about the Women's Monthly Event, an evening where all women can jam together, or learn from other women. For further information, call 01-836 6081; the Women's Liberation Workshop.

THE DERELICTS

Susan Gogan, vocals; Barbara Gogan, rhythm guitar; Dan Kelleher, bass; John Studholme, guitar; Richard Williams, drums.

THE DERELICTS aren't really a woman's band any more, since they've got as many men as women. But they're one of the first bands everybody thinks of, partly because there used to be two more women in the band who've since left (one is Marion Fudge, a bass-player who works as a journalist on 'Spare Rib' magazine and has done more to help women musicians in this country than anybody else; they're very much a community band, playing good-time dancin' rock 'n' roll in a straightforward, bashing way. Susan in jeans and jumper is a no-frills sweet-voiced vocalist, never attempting to woo the audience.

"We never even thought of joining a band," says Susan in the next-door bar — they're playing in the Nashville Rooms that night. It was the squatter's



movement that brought the band together — all the musicians lived in squats in Ladbroke Grove, Ladbroke Grove.

They did experience trouble at one stage with previous male band members trying to push the women to the side, and now, they say, a good balance has been achieved. "But at the time it was definitely a male thing. The men had more experience and assumed that we had nothing to offer, which wasn't the case. We all got oversensitive, but it did help us define the band's politics very clearly."

Liz is the Derelicts' roadie, with some entertaining stories of Liz's roadie's excrement and occasional resentment.

Liz: "Women have got to get over the idea of going to see a male band and fancying them, they've got to be conditioned not to be in love with rock stars. Advice? 'Just think about the instrument you want to play, and go ahead and play it. You've got as much chance as anybody else. A lot of women wait for the approval of a man before they do anything. You've got to learn to do without that.'

together because there wasn't any other outlet for women professionals to play without aggro from male musicians, rather than 'dry feminist political motivation'. They aim to please, not disturb; simply, they want to play. They're even written a song, 'Sophisticated Lady', designed to please any women in the audience who might feel automatic resistance at seeing women onstage.

"We want to be a sophisticated girl group," says the twins, Annis and Anne Peters. They started out singing backup on reggae records, (Sharon Forrester, Johnny Clarke, many others), but gave up when they had to fitter their energy away on hassles for their money. Now they're happy, playing opening sets for the Chi-Lites, playing discos round the country.

The Shuffles play swinging, funky, funk, all original material (much of it written by rhythm guitarist/singer Mary-Ann Hughes) and they're in tip-top form for commercial success. *Continues next page*

EMILY SWAY AND THE SHUFFLE SISTERS

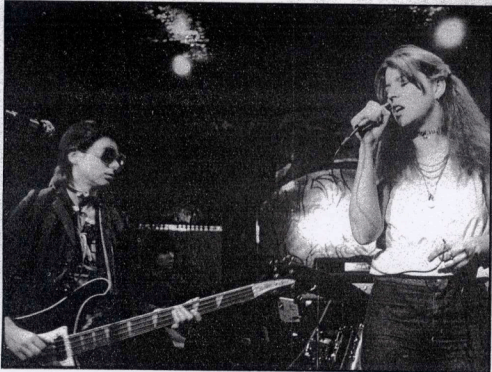
Julie Usher, lead guitar; Mary-Ann Hughes, rhythm, gtr. vocals; Sheila Gill, bass guitar; Gail Shipley, drums; Annis & Anne Peters, lead vocals.

PROBABLY MY favourite band of the lot, but that's because they play my kind of music — funk as opposed to rock.

They're the strongest band we saw in terms of individual musicianship — every band member is hot; and the twin vocalists sway with professional assurance; they belt out the songs, soulful and direct. "We haven't got our image sorted out yet. It's very difficult," they all sighed during a break, as we clustered round the gas fire in the draughty L-shaped rehearsal room.

Three members of the band had been trying to get a woman band together for a long time, and offered horror stories of being turned down for auditions on the phone simply for being a woman. The Sways are a perfect example of women who've got

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MOTHER SUPERIOR

Kate Buddeke, lead vocals; Jacque Badger, bass; Jacque Crowe, drums; Simon Fletcher, keyboards.

I WAS late for Mother Superior's gig at the Red Lion, Fulham — I got lost. But I saw enough to be agreeably impressed. The band veer towards jazz, dealing in extended lengthy numbers with an almost operatic flair for extravagant lyrics and breaks.

Lead singer Kate Buddeke

flaunts a mane of fair hair and can shake ass with the best of 'em, singing with fire. Bass player Jacque Badger looks real mean, a bit like Nils Lofgren, a slight figure in fetching shades, close-cropped hair, wrenching a raunchy bass sound with a lean, elegant style of playing. Jacque Crowe is really hot on drums;

probably the best woman drummer I saw on my rounds. The night I saw them their guitar player had run off to join Brandy, and a male friend filled in competently. There's also a male keyboards player, Simon Fletcher, who's heard all the wisecracks before, thank you very much.

But anyway, how come one man?

"If you're really into being female," says Kate in the box-like dressing-room upstairs behind the bar, "it's tragic. But we just wanted someone who could play. It just so happened that we were all girls before."

The Runaways? "Nothing but girls being girls." The two quotes may seem contradictory — let's face it, they are — but they sum up a major conflict for women musicians: how to be women without being womanly in the conventional all-out-to-please-the-fella's way. I'd been particularly impressed by their finale — an excellent, vivacious version of the Stones' 'Gimme Shelter' that more than stood up to the original.

"Yes, although we rely a lot on bass arrangements and we're jazzy, we don't fit into any specific musical category."

They'd played a bunch of rock songs I didn't recognise by Famous Rock Bands, as well as their own stuff — after personnel changes, they're still building up an entirely original set, so to an extent they're in a state of flux. But even at this precarious stage of their two-year career, they've got solid/saleable potential (A&R men take note...)

"All the woman bands I know in the States are together because they want to play music," says Kate recklessly, "they want to say 'ain't no man in our outfit'."

"It's just tough for anybody to start a band," says Crowe, when Simon offers that women bands are "good for a kick-off, to get exposure."

"...can be a disadvantage," explains Crowe, "especially if they want you to be in a real female image..."



BRANDY

Cathy Feehey, keyboards; Gill Saward, vocals, flute, congas, guitar; Audrey Swinburne, guitar; Val Lloyd, drums.

I DIDN'T manage to see Brandy through conflicting schedules. As it turns out, they don't fit in this story since Polydor are releasing their first single on January 7th, 'Obe-ya.'

I spoke to bass player Chris Leon on the phone, and this is what she had to say. "The fact that we're all girls is obviously a gimmick, but that doesn't mean we aren't out to prove that women can do it. I always wanted to be a bass player, just because I like doing it. I've been in two woman bands before, Bitch and Faith, Hope and Charity, but that's only a small proportion of bands I've played in."

"It's difficult to say whether it's better being on the road with all women or not. It's difficult

because when you're on the road there's tension, and because you're all women you tend to get bitchy. But at the same time, it's good in other ways. You're all girls together so you can have a laugh. The new single's a mid-tempo funky kind of thing. Cathy Feehey, our keyboards player writes most of our songs including that."

"Yes, she does write love songs (*most women bands creak that in horror — V.G.*) but what did she say? Oh yes — I'm inspired when I fall in love and when I fall out of love. It's natural isn't it? I do it all the time!"

"No, I hadn't realised we were the first woman band to be signed to a contract. You know, when you're involved you don't see it in that light — it's just normal. It's just life."

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SLITS

Palmolive, drums; Kate Korus, rhythm guitar; Suzi Gutsy, bass; Arianna Forster, lead vocals.

AS SOON as you step into the squat, you're made forcibly aware of the presence of cats. Walk down a rickety staircase, avoiding planks missing from the floor if possible, and open the door with the loud noise coming from behind it.

Inside, it's a dank, dark basement. A chaotic environment, packing-cases strewn about, gaping cracks in the floorboards, and three women blasting out incredibly speedy, driving New Wave Rock.

Slits have formidable power and attack, even releasing in this ultra-gloomy basement, even without skinny 14-year-old Arianna belting out the heavy message lyrics of their own compositions.

Palmolive is short and sturdy, with darkly flashing Spanish good looks. She's a vicious drummer. Kate's shapely, with flashing grey/black hair, an elegantly be-Oxammed American with a tingling line in rhythm guitar. Suzi, a lawdy wild rose with a thick mop of dark waving hair, rosy cheeks, brown eyes, and rosy-red lips, plays bass with dogged ferociousness. We adjourn to a sleazy cafeteria off the Edgware Road, where we all have cups of tea and Suzi eats a rather dubious jam tart.

Suzi has been trying to form a women's band for years. She was in a woman band called Chaos, "one of all the trouble we had." Suzi Quatro is her inspiration. Quatro's only fault, to Suzi, is that she beat her to it. Suzi's parents bought her brother a drum kit, but they wouldn't help Suzi buy a bass guitar. Suzi left home early.

"You've got to learn that everything they're telling you is bullshit," says Kate. "It's really hard not to feel silly because you're a girl and you're expected to think in a silly way, not know how to put lights together, or carry heavy things."

Split say that politics is boring, but they're writing songs about ripping off from supermarkets. And if that ain't politics... But



Kate argues, "Politics are into making people think a certain way. We just want to make people think."

A couple of nights later, I meet Arianna for the first time; she'd been at school when I visited the rehearsal. It was at an Aswad gig at the Nashville Rooms. Joe Strummer was there and Johnny Rotten walked out early. Palmolive and Arianna were both wearing elaborate black woads of make-up slashed round their eyes, and the word 'SLIT' painted

on their necks and cheeks. They'd only just decided on the name, and were justifiably excited about it.

"Are you Vivien Goldman?" Arianna asked with what appeared to be dismay. Why shouldn't I be?

"I don't know," answered Arianna, with her faint German accent lingering on the words, "I thought you'd be much younger." They'll be coming your way after Christmas — on all the best punk bills.