

Nitzer Ebb energetic and half-naked; Primal Scream fun but too short

by Christine F. de Leon

This was my Reading Week gig blitz: Nitzer Ebb and Primal Scream. The only difference between the two acts was at one you danced to keep alive, at the other you danced because you were tripping on "feel good" drugs.

Nitzer Ebb played an energetic set, half-naked and percussion-happy.

Fanclub musically unsnobbish and very, very lucky

by Eric Alper

"We're musically un-snobbish," says Teenage Fanclub guitarist Raymond McGinley. He sounds like he's barely awake, even though it's the crack of noon.

It's a day before the band's North American television debut on *Saturday Night Live*. They are just starting their tour over here, and yes, they still are the most talked-about group to hit the scene since...since Teenage Fanclub's release *Bandwagonesque*.

"We like to listen to anything," McGinley says. "Big Star, Sonic Youth, Big Black, Dinosaur Jr., The Beach Boys, The Byrds, Gram Parsons, Buffalo Springfield — the lot."

It shows in Teenage Fanclub's music. Their new single, "The Concept" (with the lyric: "She doesn't do drugs / but she does The Pill"), begins with some tuneful gunge, a well-buried melody and an out-of-tune guitar before exploding into lovely, expert harmonies. The Beatles would have admired it.

McGinley is surprised at the fuss they've caused. Their first album, *A Catholic Education*, seemed to have come from nowhere; it was raw, ragged and frankly less than top notch.

"What happened had a lot to do with luck," explains McGinley, modestly. "I really do think that. We were just at the right place at the right time."

The right place was New York's prestigious media beano, The New Music Seminar. The time was Summer, 1990. Suddenly, mysteriously, Teenage Fanclub was the most desirable ticket in town.

"It was completely by accident," confesses McGinley. "We were signed to a label called Matador, run by the same bloke who signed Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr. and Nirvana to major labels. He's a hip guy and a lot of people at major record companies respect his taste."

The result was a deal with the medium-sized Creation label in Britain and the huge Geffen label in North America.

Declares McGinley: "Geffen are intelligent. British majors have a strange idea of what commercial means — usually innocuous crap."

They remain unperturbed by a silly name.

"It's a very attractive name." Silly, attractive — such a fine line, y'know? "We just put words together and it sounded great. It gets to a stage where it doesn't matter, you just think of the band in question. Mind you, it was obvious Spandau Ballet were stupid before you'd heard a note."

Ah, while we're name-dropping, what about groups such as Lush and My Bloody Valentine? The "new" British invasion seems to be nothing but flavours of the month pushed by the British music press.

"I think we're different because Year Zero for these bands was only 1986... 1987, say, Jesus and Mary Chain or the Cocteau Twins. But the best music was made in the 60s and the 70s."

It would seem natural with the group being touted as The Next Big Thing and making magazines' Top 3 lists that it would play huge arenas. Millions will see them on *SNL*. Will

CONCERT

Nitzer Ebb
The Phoenix
Thursday, February 13
Primal Scream
RPM
Tuesday, February 18

The familiarity of "Join In the Chant" got ebbheads stage diving and body

slamming, but the pace slowed down when the band played material off their newly released *Ebbhead*. The songs "Family Man" and "I Give In To You," which were greeted with much enthusiasm, were exceptions.

Rock and Roll's number one rule is never trust anyone over 30, but this crowd made an exception for industrial music's pioneers who hail from Billericay, Essex, a suburb of London.

The final encore (there were three), including the song "Fun To Be Had," was a good way to end the show, leaving Ebbheads with bruises to brag about for days to come. I wonder if die-hard fans noticed Nitzer's sample of Soul II Soul's infamous backbeat in their new material.

By the way it's pronounced "Night-zer" not "Nit-zer" (you say To-may-to, I say to-mah-to...).

VNV Nation was an excellent choice as opener. They have definite anarchistic (as opposed to artistic) intentions, although at times they can be a little preachy. Their message (North America is evil) rang true on the song "Serial Killer," a poetic recitation of America's involvement in the Persian Gulf War. VNV is an industrial band to look out for.

Primal Scream were fun, but arrived with attitude — the band showed up an hour and a half late, completely drugged out of their heads. Not that many audience members minded, since they were pretty much in the same state, looking like Stone Roses

band members.

Although Primal Scream relied heavily on backtracks, the voices of Bobby Gillespie (of Jesus and Mary Chain fame) and Denise Johnson carried well into the mescaline-soaked night. They fed off the audience's energy and off each other. Gillespie and the lead guitarist had a cute little shag-session during one of those wah-wah guitar anthems.

Gillespie's performance was "Jaggeresque," to be polite about the blatant rip-off. But songs like "Come Together," "Loaded" and "Shine Like Stars" display Primal Scream's ingenious marriage between indie's jangly guitar and sultry soul. Also, the improvisation of Sister Sledge's "We Are Family" was a treat.

Primal Scream's performance was far too short and hindered by the band's inability to deal with its drugged state. But the audience didn't seem cheated out of \$20 (not including recreational substances).

Rave on darlings.

INTERVIEW

Teenage Fanclub
The Opera House
Monday, February 14

they have to relocate from smaller clubs to bigger ones?

"We've played these (larger) venues before, but the audiences are getting bigger. Everyone else seems to have problems selling tickets, but it doesn't bother us. It would be too

embarrassing and disheartening playing to 20 friends at the front."

Teenage Fanclub won't have to worry about that anymore. As I said goodbye, delinking the telecommunication system on the remote, I couldn't help getting the feeling that things are going to move very quickly for Teenage Fanclub from here. With a rumoured *Rolling Stone* cover next month and countless press clippings, McGinley and the boys are only a step away from Star Time.



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