

Scorching the Deuce in superlative style

by Bruce Gilchrist

If any single word can be applied to any particular live performance by any particular live band, then The Tea Party's two shows this past weekend at the Double Deuce deserve the title of excoriation.

Live Rock Show
The Tea Party
Double Deuce

In many senses the word is appropriate, for it accurately describes the sense of tremendous power that the Windsor trio possesses, but it also captures the essence of the mind expansion the band attempts with its music. The band embraces the rhythms of any kind of music it finds engaging, particularly those of non-European/American descent, and meshes these Eastern/Asian sounds with the traditional rock descents of classical guitar, slide blues guitar, psychedelica, and flat-out intensely dynamic power. The result was a tightly-played, wild ride that in reference to the opening descriptive 'peeled' away the tarnish of misguided comparisons to Led Zeppelin, and exposed the listener to an expansion of what used to be a formula process that quite literally disintegrated that formula. In

short, they created their own headspace, and they ruled without compare.

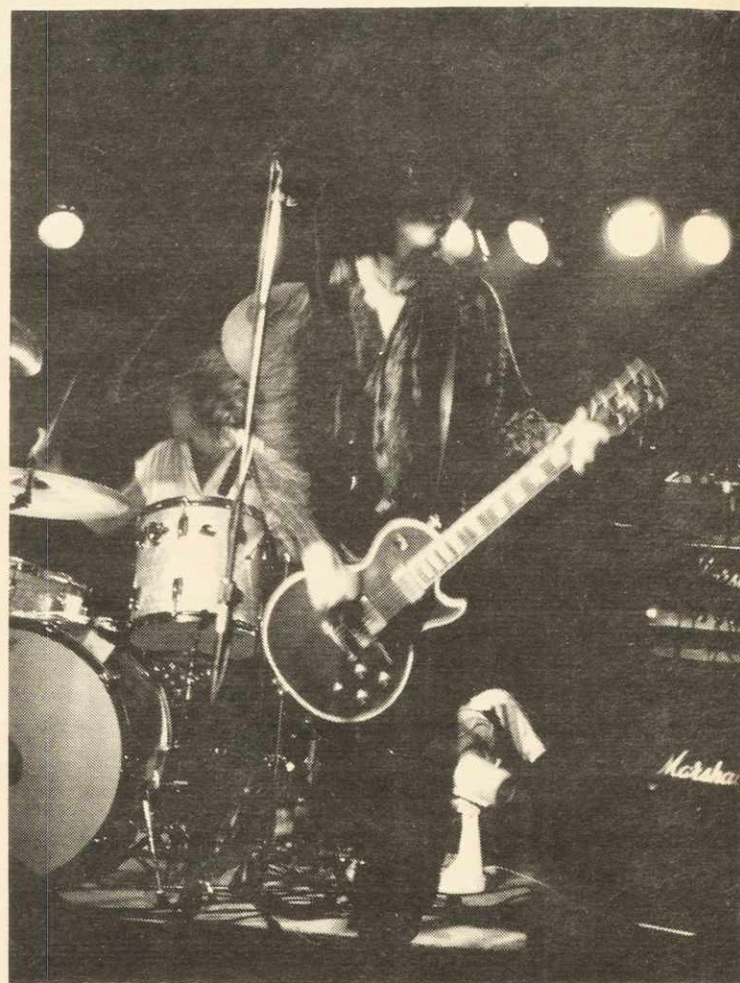
The Tea Party is a constantly evolving band and from the get-go their expansion was unmistakable. Eleven months ago, they played at the Deuce, and psychedelic power rock was the order, and it was excellent. But on these nights the band opened up to a slightly skipping CD serenade of Arabic trance music, and directly into their crunchingly powerful new single called "The River", a song they prefaced by calling "that song you can see on the fucking television". And rock it did as the crowd screamed out in anticipation of the superb power riff that leaves the riff from "Dazed and Confused" in a weakly brewed dustbowl. With a thirty-two or so inch bass drum, and immaculate bass performance the rhythm section was able to thwack out in otherworldly style, and this inspired guitarist Jeff Martin to literally snakecharm his wah-pedalled Gibson guitar in mindbending obedience.

The fans were going literally wild and a pseudomosh ensued, but this was quickly put to rest by the jump to "Midsummer's Day", an electroclassical number that started off slow with the surefire musicianship of Mr. Martin. However, the niceties were suddenly usurped by a surprising cymbal crash

and humungous bass drumming. The crowd went wild once again - especially one particular Neanderthal-in-a-brushcut insistent upon telling everyone that his name was Dylan and in particular that the band was the closest thing to Led Zeppelin that he had ever seen. While the band recoiled in revulsion they kept their professionalism and played through the asshole's chants, even later on, when Martin brought out a bow and went to town for three minutes while Dylan & Co. screamed out "Jimmy Page!"

Calming the crowd down was the next order, and they asked for some respectful quiet as they changed instruments to play their acoustic numbers. Unfortunately these songs worked out better on the first night, when the audience hushed for the most part. One song in particular, "Dreams of Reason" (I believe), was particularly wonderful to see as well as hear, as Martin brought out a 1916 Orville Gibson handcrafted 10-string harp guitar to a round of amazingly dumbfounded audience people (see photo). Meanwhile, the bassist played harmony with a lap steel and the drummer played a mini-bongo set, showing off their diversity of talent in variable style.

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The Tea Party in the midst of a stunning performance

PHOTO: MICHAEL GRAHAM



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