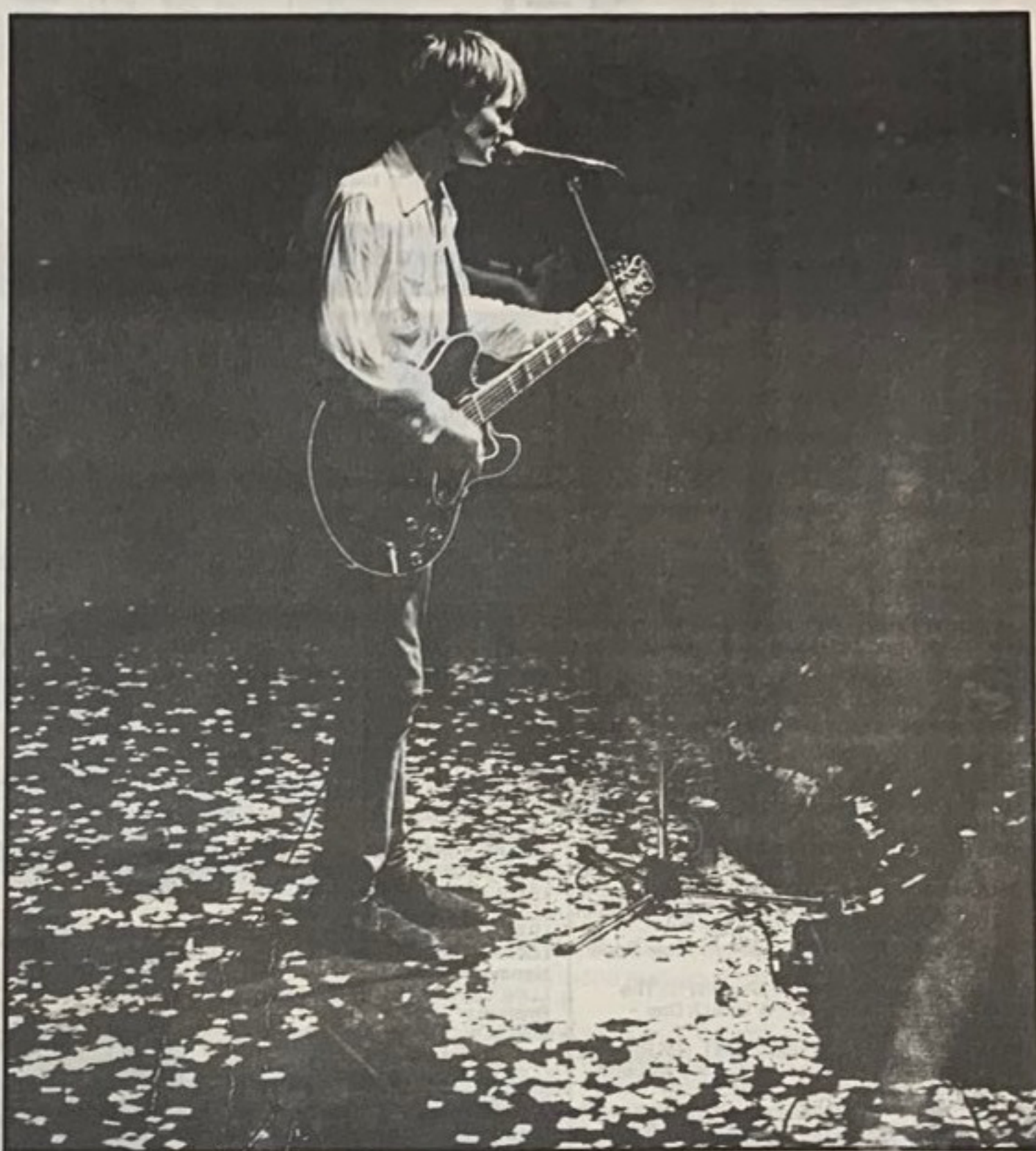


LIVE!



PIC: RICHARD BELLIA

THE HOUSE OF LOVE The Escape, Brighton

THE theory is this: The House Of Love are separated from the run-of-the-mill indie pop by a gulf of re-orientation, a new division of responsibilities that takes the typical sources (Velvets, Byrds) and turns them in dizzy cartwheels.

However, the eponymous first House Of Love LP is not quite the superlative, regenerative appropriation it might be. If there is ever a generic criticism of indie pop it is that of smallness — and to an extent "The House Of Love" still fails to engulf.

But from their opening strains of lush feedback they are convincing. The House Of Love finally exceed all expectation. Where on record they can seem definable and *palatable*, here they achieve a definitive diffusion — a displacement of intents.

It's the sound that transports their occasionally almost ordinary devices. The guitarist gives up to his noise, succumbs to

his own creation, and in doing so shatters the potential studiousness of male angst. Where Morrissey once used a gratuitous rich intensity, the House Of Love have sweet discord and bitter melody.

So what really generates magnificence is the double edge: the songs buffeted from temporary calm by near-tactile gusts of sound. And hence, where The Song has often been degraded beyond consideration, it is here resurrected. "Touch Me" feels longing and distraught, "Love In A Car" is similarly given that felt knowledge, breaching the gap between thought and belief.

And the inevitable crowd-pleasers ("Christine", "Destroy The Heart") somehow break the confines of over-familiarity, rewriting themselves by way of edgy immediacy. As if these were their moments of conception.

Superlative, yes. I'm convinced.

SIMON TURNER