



Sounds
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THIS HOUSE is a House of trouble

Ed Sirrs

Keep the House fires burning

THE HOUSE OF LOVE

The Mall ICA

"SORRY, VERY sorry", reverberates the station-masterly announcement at the end of The House Of Love's first song, "but the fire alarm is ringing. You'll all have to leave the building."

The babes in arms at the front of the stage, visibly Messiah-seeking from their new T-shirts to their Chadwick hairdos, appeal to their leader for guidance. One whines: "Guy, what shall we do?"

Don't know about you, Junior, but I'm running. . .

Cursing memories of the last false alarm here - at the Jane's Addiction gig - earlier this year, we're readmitted five minutes later. The House Of Love content themselves to light fires of a safer and altogether beatier kind, while showing a little more responsibility with regard to the dry ice machine.

This was Thursday, and by now the band were in the swing of their six-night stint. Monday's gig had been a severe disappointment, nothing more than a capable croon and pick through the debut album with 'Destroy The Heart' served up as a slightly sickly "waffer-thin mint" to ease digestion.

One of the problems with Monday had been the poor form of guitarist Terry Bickers. None of his

effects pedals were having any effect, and great lunges of chord power weren't really what his big red guitar was lovingly crafted for.

But on Thursday, you couldn't have imagined a more demonically sculptured wall of sonic bliss. 'So Dest', the first number, was loping and bluesy. 'Man To Child', their second, shivered with secrets, while 'Christine' hurtled into view so dramatically that Chadwick messed up the first verse. And a new, song, abrasive and jerky, had so much sheer nerve it plain frazzled over the top. This song has a working title of 'I Don't Know Why I Love You', but Chadwick says he's thinking of calling it 'Number 6'. How inappropriate can you get. This is not a number, it is a *free song!*

'Never', the last 45, was played faithfully and sounded great, and was followed by 'The Beatles And The Stones' with its uncanny hook: The Beatles and The Stones, "*put the V in Vietnam*".

By now, bravery was giving way to a nonchalant deathwish and THOL were looking for a fifth wind to throw caution to. What's our most difficult song to play live? 'Love In A Car.' On the album it balances precariously on between six and eight guitar tracks. Live, they had two, but thanks to

Bickers' FX-triggering feet, they got the feeling exactly right. Anyone who roots backing tapes as a possible reason will be fined £600,000 for libel; The House Of Love, now just as two years ago, are a Luddites' birthday party.

'Happy', back in the set after being sentenced to a year in the wilderness for the crime of "getting stale", biffed its way back into contention courtesy of Bickers' screeching solo. His brief in this song is, You've got four bars, Tel, now do your worst. He did and it was evil. Chris Groothuizen on bass almost looked up at this point. The rest of the time the man was a blue bass guitar and a bowed head.

The age-old do-we-end-the-set-with-a-Velvets-song-or-not dilemma was sorted out at the eleventh hour, and the nominee was the obscure instrumental B-side of 'Shine On', 'Love'. If rock 'n' roll, as has been suggested, is an excuse for a lot of noise to be made in an attempt to make sense of love, disaster and madness, you might as well do what THOL did tonight: leave the words out and let your guitar gnash its teeth till it screams.

On Thursday night The House Of Love were stunning. You should, I'm afraid, have been there.

DAVID CAVANAGH