

THE HOUSE OF LOVE LEEDS WAREHOUSE

ROCK 'N' ROLL VAHALLA! All round me gruesome scenes of carnage are unfolding, echoing the pursuits of Viking pillagers centuries ago. Two bald sailors wrestle in a pool of vomit. One disgruntled woman bites off her best mate's ear. Guy Chadwick is flashing his pride and joy. There's a dazed and confused horse in the corner . . . Hold it . . .

In truth nothing vaguely untoward happens on House Of Love's second date in a series of sixty. Road-fever is still a bleary-eyed telephone call away, and though Guy did indeed promise to hold forth at length on the subject of his penis, on-the-road anecdotes are hard to come by.

We settle for the usual furrowed-brow musing. Think of the Tryannical Triumvirate: Guy Chadwick, David Gedge, Morrissey. Stalwarts of the sensitive confessional, their lives are an open book. Little wonder that followers spring up in the oddest of places. These super-fans are entirely dependent on their heroes, a frightening thought. But you can see why they gain succour and strength from The House Of Love, always the odd ones out. Indeed, the rich trappings of rock's history have little and everything to do with their phenomenal success. They've paid their dues. You still can't beat that.

Tonight the set varies from the aggressive to the bitter and twisted to the angry to the plain twisted. But if you were expecting a fully functional death machine blitzkrieg you were bound to be disappointed. Atmosphere was the key. House Of Love are ferocious right now, which doesn't necessarily mean they don't know how to be subtle about it. 'Destroy The Heart', for example, was beautifully understated, throwing its plain wierd metaphysical love poetry lyrics into light relief.

Primarily you've got to talk about the guitars; what incandescent bliss could be contained within six strings. Terry B reinvents the notion of the guitar hero. It's a far cry from days when he'd hang his head down and remain immobile, a la New Order, all this thrusting and pirouetting. The noises made by his occasional interplay with Chadwick are out of this world. (And the rhythm section ain't half bad either.) . . . Swooping, gracious glissandos of fret-frenzy topped with ululating refrains and . . . you get the drift.

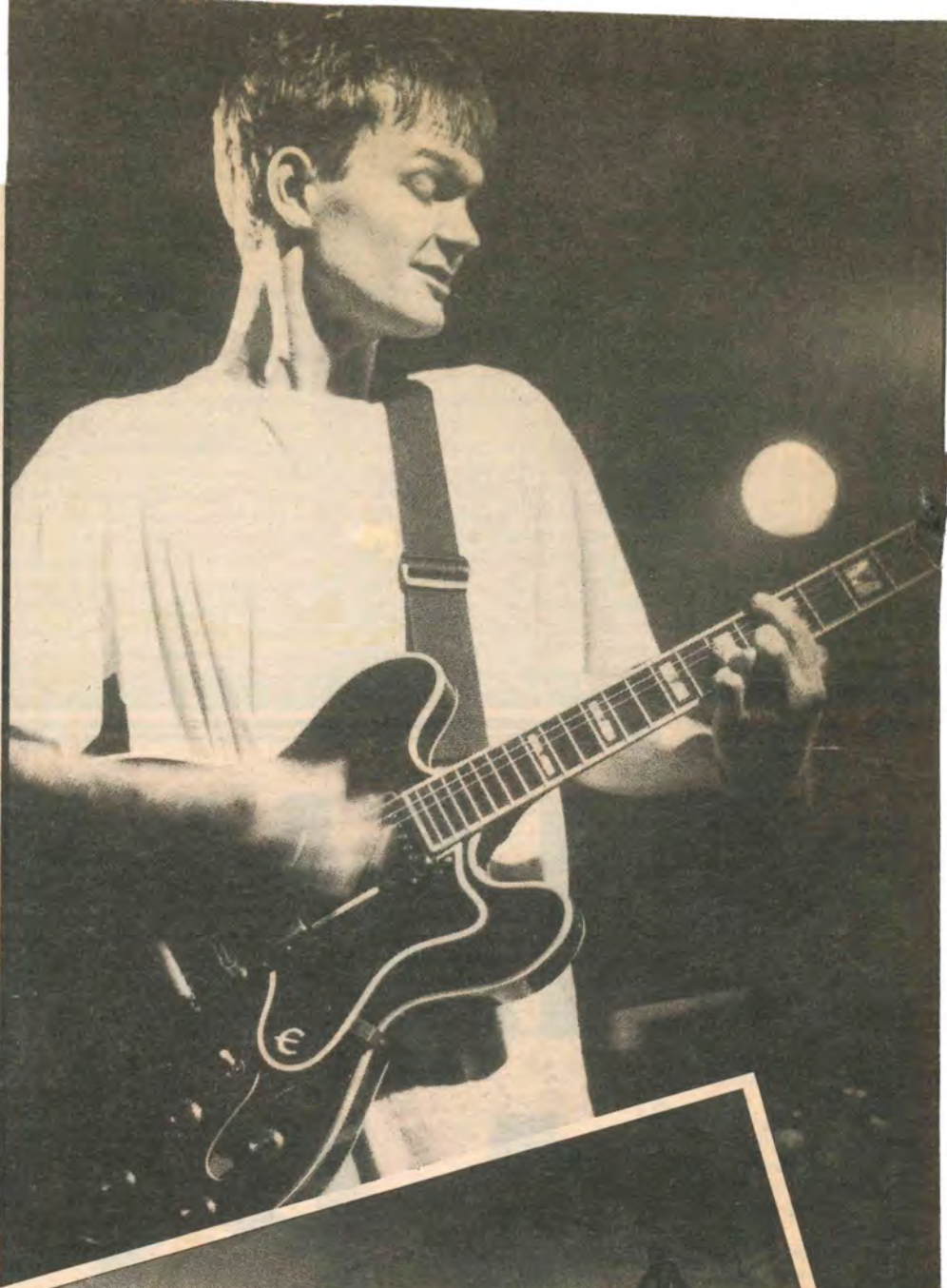
The new songs are drawn with bold strokes. Obviously this year has been a very productive period, if harrowing, as the documentation of the recording process seems to say. They've drawn strength from setbacks and come up with some sparkling gems. Everything is more robust, well-rounded and developed now, in fact the older songs pale in comparison, almost seeming like blueprints from a bygone age.

There's a lot of activity going down on stage. Guy is trying the new chicken dance (hold one leg in the air and squawk), while Terry straddles his guitar like it was something dangerous. The grimaces attest to the fact they've

reached r'n'r nirvana, a heavenly utopia where nothing matters much and the cut of your clothes doesn't determine your treatment. Rutting away like well-hung bulldogs, House Of Love don't get away with murder, they don't coast, they just smirk slightly as if to say "We're here to say, what're you gonna to about it."

I still remember when they used to do Velvet Underground covers down in New Cross. The sour-faced attitude still remains intact, but there's breath and depth to their vision now. They'll be in the American charts' higher echelons next year or I'll eat raw sewage. Why? Because this guitar-flecked semi-drone is near-perfect and evocative of mountains, wide open spaces, joy and grooviness. The radio programmers will fall over themselves. Wish they could've seen tonight's brilliantly effective set, instead of waffling on, as Simon Bates did recently on Radio One that 'I Don't Know Why I Love You' (savage and serrated tonight like some sharp cutting edge) wouldn't be a hit because they weren't ready yet.

"I'd invite you to our hotel, but I'm sure you've already been to jail" was Guy Chadwick's wry parting shot after an engrossing interview that fulfilled as much as it promised. He's articulate, witty, wide-eyed yet vaguely cynical. And ever-ready to elaborate on any subject you care to toss. You'd have thought he'd had it up to here



Out of their heads on a bottle of Hirondelle (pictured right), the Housies contemplate their next backstage outrage. Above: Guy Chadwick, seconds before he set light to his guitar and trashed the stage.

with questing journalists and the serpent-like . . .

"We haven't changed at all, it's just that we're playing better now. We always try to avoid cliches, we know the pitfalls. We've seen it in other bands. We wanna make music, we don't wanna masturbate. There are too many people out there with few ideas and big machinery behind them to disperse those paltry ideas. That's bullshit.

"This whole elitist attitude, I've never related to it, it's always made life difficult for me. I'm just glad that the decade is over. The seventies were bad enough, that's the decade I grew up with. Maybe it

just takes a while to digest what's going on now but I find it horrific . . ."

And here we come to my only minor gripe with House Of Love. The eighties were an amazing decade and nothing's over yet. For the experimentalists and those who shy away from mainstream paths it was boomtime. Only traditionalists like these guys would fail to appreciate that. And tradition is a curse, they should escape its shackles, do something ever so slightly off the beaten path. Message ends.

"Dance music has always been popular, it's not responsible for the current slump. Black music has always been very popular. When I

chanced upon Beloved's record I thought it was shit at first but I later realised you could actually listen to it. It was 'atmospheric'. We wouldn't be averse to doing dance music, it's not that removed from us, but that's maybe in three, four years' time. Maybe."

Pity. "We're uncompromising, we never bend, we got so much flak when we first started out . . . people used to think we were hippies. Imagine. Terry used to be particularly self-indulgent and the songs were much slower, much more epic. We just stuck with it. It was two years before we got any attention. Creation gave us a hard time, but that's OK, don't blame them.

"Lyrically, it's just my diary, just day-to-day living. Terry has so much more to offer than you

hear now. I'm really excited at the moment."

Do you ever come up against writer's blocks?

"Yes, definitely. This year has been trying to put it mildly. I really was panicking around May. I was writing this stuff and it wasn't focussed, didn't really gell with what the band needed to do. There's no jealousy, they were very supportive. I'm really looking forward to the next LP; they'll contribute more."

We discuss the recording process; how they had to scrap a whole LP on the strength of two covers; The Velvet Underground and The Doors — their abiding influence; more about Terry's antics. I find out Jim Morrison didn't die in a bathtub after all. (He was in fact found on the subway, swathed in blankets, like some bloated bum.) And Guy Chadwick is

generally forthcoming, only reticent when discussing the tricky subject of racism, which he's whole-heartedly against, but can't abide the right-on sanctimonious types preaching something they don't understand.

House Of Love were really cool in Leeds. I've seldom seen such beaming faces as the radiant ones trucking home afterwards, clutching copies of a free kick-ass live tape. Why, some hopefuls are even queuing up for autographs and shit. Rave on, rave on . . .

"Music speaks for itself. Everything else is advertising. I really believe in that dictum, but what can you do in our position? At the end of the day people are either gonna like it or not."

At this point he's handed a recent party photograph.

"Shit, I look really handsome in that."

Dele Fadele



HOL's Guy Chadwick auditions for Revenge