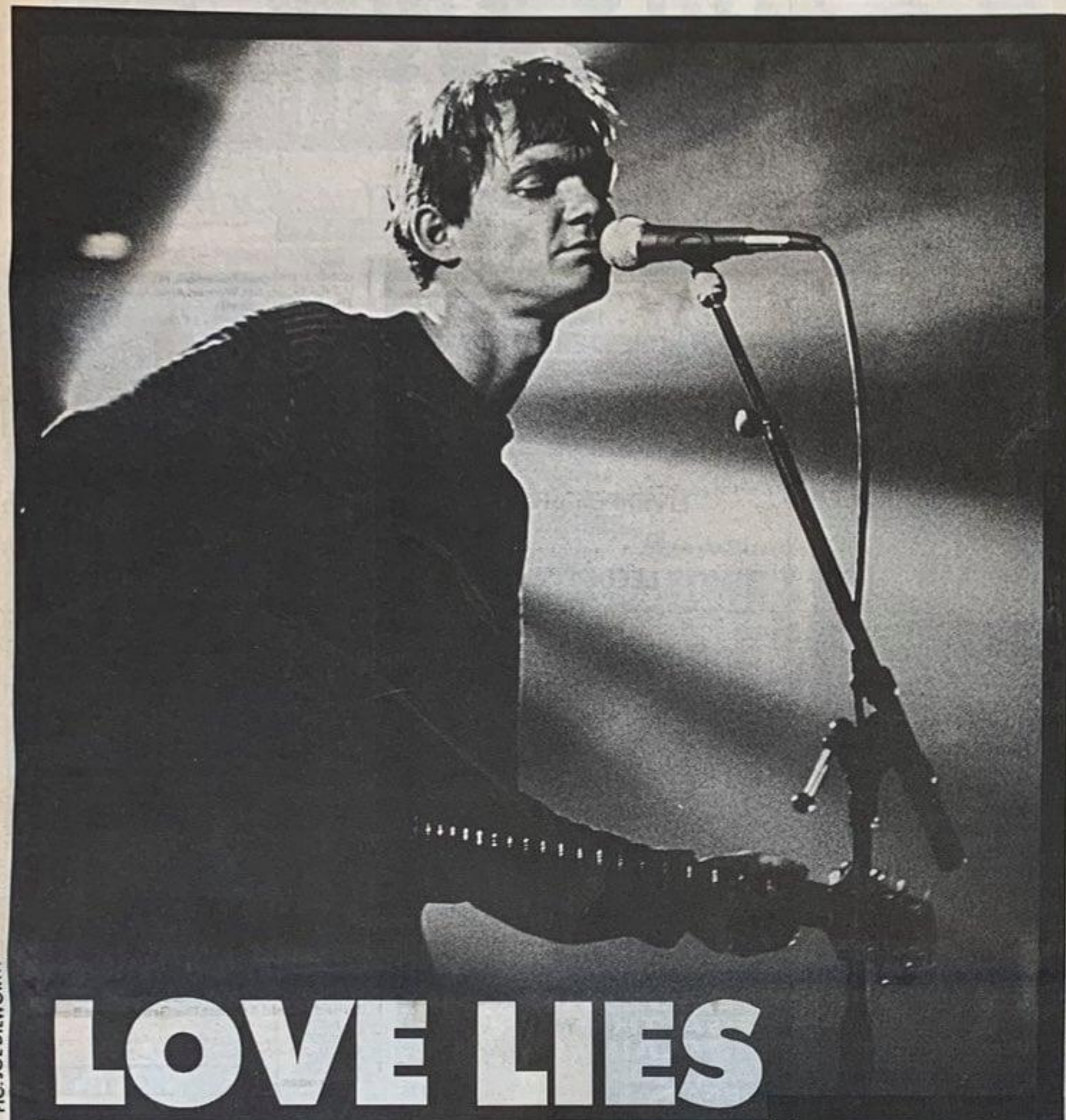


LIVE!



PIC: JOE DILWORTH

LOVE LIES LIMP

THE HOUSE OF LOVE
ICA, LONDON

SIX nights at the ICA, that should be enough to let The House Of Love stretch out, loosen up, lose their second album nerves. Tonight, the third show, is rumoured to be entirely new material, and the restrained atmosphere of the first two nights is forgotten. We're on tenterhooks.

"Allo," says Chadwick in his best David Essex sub-cockney, introducing an intricate five-minute opener that encapsulates every HOL nuance that has brought them this far. Ebbing and flowing, it switches from raw nerve-end guitar to virtual silence. It's called "Se Dest", and its cavernous sound and heartfelt Chadwick vocal ("I've never been so sure, that there was love before") singlehandedly shatter the disappointment of their last single, "Never". They haven't lost it. "Sigh", by contrast is, a straightforward teasing chimer, all harmonies and back beat, much to the relief of the dancers at the front. But "Baby Teen" is back to the stratospheric pleasures of the opener, real paths in the melody with Terry Bickers' guitar dripping melancholy, reminiscent of Tim Buckley's "Dream Letter" — a mighty recommendation.

From here in things go awry. The group's presence so far has been minimal and the atmosphere has only been rescued by the liquid blues and greens in which the stage is flooded. With new songs it's understandable, but now a batch of B-sides are unexpectedly wheeled out. "Safe" rocks hammily, startlingly similar to "Addicted To Love" while "Mr Jo" is an embarrassment. Chadwick's lyricism is often suspect, but with "He's a walrus and his head is grey", and "It's gonna be a hot old summer, gonna stay, gonna be a bummer", he does himself proud. It's laughably bad.

Throughout the set Chadwick (no Christian name. As in Jagger. Or Gillan) remains virtually motionless. None of the strutting around the stage, his head nodding like a demented pigeon, that the crowd are used to. Of the closing songs, only the soft shuffle of "The Beatles And The Stones" ("They put the V in Vietnam") cuts the mustard. An apathetic audience becomes positively restless as they close with an untitled instrumental: Chadwick points his guitar to the heavens, Bickers teases some hideous distortions from his amp, but compared to The Stone Roses' hypnotic instrumental finale, "Resurrection", this is tuneless mush.

The encore is "I Wanna Be Your Dog" (if only they'd tried "I Wanna Be Adored", if only they'd shown some *humour*), and the disgruntled punters have had enough: "Waste of £5." "Boring, bloody boring." "Biggest piece of shit I've ever seen." Considering Chadwick's reputation for running the band along military lines, they were *slack* — all the more annoying because at one point they had it, they were gripping, they looked like at least a part of the future. They ended, at best, uncertainly. The House Of Love are living dangerously.

BOB STANLEY

TIM FINN
BORDERLINE, LONDON

A YOUNG man of unhinged mind exposed to the infamy of public ridicule, I was told. I grabbed my cape and ran. With that name I expected the gnashing of teeth and gouging of eyes at least, but Tim Finn isn't the barefoot loon haranguing passing gentry that I'd imagined. He's a very badly dressed Australian yes, but this is a tale of more ordinary madness.

Finn is a people's man, representing us all as hapless victims of an independently lunatic world. Stalking this tiny stage, he wracks his tufted head for answers to questions both cosmic and, well, not so cosmic. "Fish can fly/Why can't I?" he rages as one fissure of bug-eyed intensity escapes his boiling brains. Conspicuously though, when clamouring about the world, his songs are strangely apolitical, precluding the idea that *individuals* may be to blame.

Finn is proof that blasted eccentricity of mind doesn't always translate into new quirks of rock. If I tell you that he is backed by Peter Gabriel's band, I do so without insinuated judgement. Let's just say that something or someone is responsible for keeping the man's expansive and magnificent mind seepage under too rigid a control. When he sings about Derek Bainbridge, the man who drove from Worktop to Downing Street two years ago and blew himself up in political protest, I have to laugh. Finn makes him sound like Ernie The Fastest Milkman In The West. But when he screams more abstractly or strums through a few moments of love, I'm with him every inch of the way.

MICHAEL ODELL

PERE UBU
ASTORIA, LONDON

NOW where were we? It's 1989 and Pere Ubu are bathed in bright coloured lights under polystyrene clouds and playing a kind of pop music. Some things are different. They've one drummer where of late there were two. Subsequently things are somewhat understated percussively. And Allen Ravenstine, long time Ubu synthesizer doodler, is gone. In his shoes is a Goon-era nutty professor lookalike, and whisper it, he's a good mate of the Captain (Beefheart).

Some things are the same. They must be because we are not suprised. David Thomas is by turns eloquent and deliberately bumbling, holding court as effortlessly as he holds his rotund frame. Between warbles he picks up a toy, holds it to his microphone and toots, for the heck of it. The keyboard reliably gives out all manner of ghostly squawks. Elsewhere this is a good, if no longer groundbreaking, rock group comprised of people

of no mean talent. So as "Waiting For Mary" begs the question, "What are we doing here?"

We draw a breath. The new material showcased tonight, a fair helping of the "Cloudland" album, heralds the next stage of the "Return Of The Avant-Garage". And, forgive my observation, but it all sounds like a band growing old, albeit gracefully, full of catchy little hooks and soft guitar sounds. The funny thing is it all sits so comfortably alongside "The Modern Dance", the seminal first Ubu LP, a generous portion of which we are also treated to. A veil is drawn virtually over the whole decade between the two, where Ubu got weird and ultimately lost their way. Even "Non-Alignment Pact" sounds pleasantly foot-tapping where it was once a bull dozing tour-de-force.

A whole different colour is thrown over the old material. And it makes some sense. This is not the nostalgia trip it might be, even if David Thomas does tease with 30 seconds worth of "Tokyo". There is direction and thought involved, which so many bands lack. Pere Ubu are too old and too intelligent to make mistakes, but not too old I hope, to take some more chances next time.

JAMES ROBERT

HEAD OF
DAVID/GODFLESH

ARSENAL TAVERN, LONDON
THE horror is all. Godflesh cannot escape or hide from it because the horror is them, and death is not an option. There is an awesome, opaque void around and within them as they search blindly for something irretrievable. Yet there's more to them than the mere self-loathing of the old Swans, to which there is a vague similarity.

The dub sound of the bass, drum machine and vocals create a depth that engulfs you as it enters into your stomach and swells up, stopping your breath from escaping. There are times when it is almost too much, too powerful to contemplate. If this is the flesh of God, then all your worst fears fall away short.

Head of David are a slightly more linear proposition, with more freedom of movement within their particular confinement, but less ability to create a terrifying build-up. The vocalist howls out mock-sermons as if he knows the only person to heed them will be *himself*, backed up by the insistence of the rhythms while the guitar overtakes him. They create a different, more stubborn, sense of hopelessness to Godflesh but one that still manages to involve you in its frenzy. It's a sound that allows itself to destroy everything around it in its refusal to admit defeat. HOD burn, and this is a special night indeed.

JONATHAN SELZER

pere ubu

the new single

Love, Love, Love



Taken from the Fontana Album (CD, MC, LP)
Cloudland

pere ubu live: 28/6 Cardiff., 1/7 Edinburgh.,
2/7 Newcastle., 3/7 Manchester, 4/7 Birmingham

