

# LIVES



A PICTURE of Dorian Gray? Nah, mate, I'd rather have tea with Iggy Pop

Ian T Tilton

## Construction time again

### THE HOUSE OF LOVE Leeds Warehouse

THREE HOURS before The House Of Love take the stage, Guy Chadwick informs me that he "played all the guitars on 'I Don't Know Why I Love You' and Terry (Bickers) only played ten per cent of them on the album". He is referring, not too seriously, to a preview in last week's *Sounds* that suggested Bickers' influence has been over-shadowed.

Bickers stops supping his Holsten export and wags a two-fingered reply. "Yeah, but I play all the best bits."

Outside they're queueing around the block; The House Of Love's smooth transition from indie kings to major rock force continues unabated. They're taking their time though, meticulously mapping their path, striving for perfection with an over-zealous ambition that's seen them re-record a whole album because it wasn't good enough the first time around.

All this seems a bit pedantic; when Bickers and Chadwick are on stage, the ocean of heads bobbing up and down in the front (part 45? - Ed) are loudly singing their praises. It may be only the second night of a 60-day tour destined to make or break the band, but they already look magnificent.

The cramped conditions, the blue glaze and the bouncers throwing people out for smoking weed add a certain intimacy to the emotive charge, but there's an airy space in the heart of the noise, a casual confidence which suggests everything's under control yet steers the set away from tedious rock excesses.

'Christine' is, perhaps, sharper than it's ever been before onstage, the schizophrenic guitar buzz seemingly bathed in burning kerosene as Bickers castrates the electric, *Dr Who*-theme discharge falling out of his guitar. Similarly, the

vintage rock menace of 'Destroy The Hoart' is perfectly executed.

Bickers, a rock 'n' roller at heart, is at times comparable to Johnny Marr, but Chadwick is no Morrissey. One guesses that Guy would prefer to sit down for the evening with The Stooges and The Stones rather than Oscar Wilde. That said, Chadwick's sensitive songwriting incorporates a misty romanticism divorced from, say, Gedge's grey realism; THOL's world is one of enlarged emotions befitting the spectacular rock dramatics within which it rotates. 'I Don't Know Why I Love You' fits comfortably into a mixed set which chooses to ignore 'Never' and 'Shine On', and sounds even better live than it does on vinyl.

The material previewed from the new album - including 'The Beatles And The Stones' and 'Clothes' - indicates that not only are the band aware of their heritage, but that they will not always go for the obvious route to stadium status; their best songs remain both too frail and too personal to ever seriously compete with the U2s and Simple Minds of this world.

This works against them on the awkward 'Sediste', but with 'Road' transformed into a rip-roaring, all systems go gung ho climax, The House Of Love prove that they can let roar with the loudest.

Tonight is nothing but a confirmation of what everyone already knows. For now, The House Of Love are a basic rock band who relish simplicity and write classic songs that show the potential for mega mega success. The question is, What will they be like in 40 gigs' time, playing in Bognor on a wet Monday night in January?

RON ROM