

Rocking to Utopia



THREE-quarters of the way through the gig, some bonehead showered the stage with a full pint of beer. There's always one isn't there?

The packed student's union hall at the Thames Valley College were witnessing what was probably the best live set seen in Slough for some time, and one bleary-eyed, booze-sodden dickhead does his (or her?) level best to upset the equilibrium.

Guy Chadwick, standing centre stage, saw the pint of the nation's finest heading his way and deftly stepped to one side, avoiding the spray without so much as missing a chord. The House Of Love played on.

To be fair, this was the only incident that marred an otherwise splendid evening. It was also pleasing, in a sadistic

House of Love back with a bang

kind of way, to see the crowd surge towards the culprit, who was soon lost in the steaming, punching melee. Justice was done, Slough-style.

The crowd was really behind the band tonight, and The House Of Love reciprocated with almost effortless brilliance.

The line-up has altered slightly since we last saw HOL in Berkshire (Reading Festival '89) with the exit of guitarist Terry Bickers and arrival of Simon Walker.

To most, 1989 was sadly HOL-free. They seemed to fade away from the forefront, leaving some followers to worry like hell about a pending split-up, while

others subscribed to the "resting on the laurels to hell with the fans" theory.

But they're back, and all is forgiven. To see the packed hall give an equally wild response to older tracks like Salome and Plastic as to a new composition Beatles and the Stones, proved the point that HOL may have been long gone, but certainly not forgotten.

The stage is moodily lit, the band's movements at times seem almost lethargic, but the shimmering guitars and Chadwick's vocals carry the audience to a higher plane. A plane where brilliant lighting, gaudy costumes and snappy dance routines are superfluous.

The shrill wail of sound that leads into Christine is still one of the most thrilling intros I have heard in any song. The new single, Shine On, is modelled with a masterful finesse.

Two encores and HOL disappear into the wings. Just as you feel you've reached rock 'n roll Utopia, the gig winds down, and, as suddenly as it started, is gone.

That is the beauty of The House Of Love. They keep you on the edge, craving more. It wouldn't be fair to say they tease, but you can be damn sure every manjack in that hall last Friday night will be back again next time.