

BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL

Probably
number 7 (ish)

**Sting
and
Bono
don't
jet in
for
Bristol
Sound
City 95**

**Suede,
Sleeper,
Elastica,
Gene,
Bluetones,
Pulp,
JAMC,
John Peel.**

**The
Sex,
Drugs
& Rock
'n' Roll
issue**

**Joining
The
Kiddies
At The
Radio
One FM
Roadshow**

**NO....
Portishead, Massive
Tricky OR ABBA**

.....probably.....

It's Easter weekend, and half the Bristol SF group have gone to Docklands for Confabulation. As an SF zine, you might expect this issue to be full of our wild and wacky doings at the Eastercon, but - what the hell - you can fill that in for yourselves. This issue starts instead with the adventures of those who stayed behind. Yes, while we were yawning zombie fashion and shuffling down for breakfast on Easter Monday, Simon and Tim were up and out, ready to face the delights of the Radio One Roadshow.

WAKE UP BRISTOL by Simon Lake

To introduce Bristol's Sound City music festival, the Radio One roadshow has cruised into town for the Easter Monday bank holiday. Predictably after a week of clear blue skies and summer temperatures, the good weather has been replaced by grey clouds and a chilly breeze. Braving the elements, Tim and I set off for some holiday fun, a bizarre line up of Deuce, the Boo Radleys and Ultimate Kaos waiting to entertain us. The following report comes from a self-confessed pop fan who has to declare a ten year lapse since last visiting this bastion of summer entertainment.

10.15

With the live broadcast due at 11, Canons Marsh is only a third full. A token steward leans disinterestedly against a metal barrier. The radio one 'goodymobile' (brand new One FM t-shirts being vigorously hawked) stands rather forlornly about 50 metres behind the meagre crowd. Blasting from the speakers is the last hour of the Steve Wright Breakfast Show. This, apparently, turns out to be the last week of his show. Judging by the insipid music and the selection of 'amusing' newspaper stories it will be no great loss.

10.30

Spared the last half hour of Steve Wright as a number of warm up acts come on to liven the crowd up. First up is a female soul singer who gives us a revamped version (i.e. they've stuck a drum beat over it) of Foreigner's 'I Want To Know What Love Is'. Begin to wish they'd stuck with Steve Wright.

10.45

Our host for the show, Mark Goodier, is introduced to the crowd. Welcomes us with typically hyped up frenzy. Implores us to scream louder when we're live on the radio. Exciting warm up acts now replaced by two runs through the show's opening jingle. Has to be done twice because the crowd makes the mistake of whooping with excitement too soon on the first run through.

Sun resolutely refuses to shine, but at least it's not raining yet.

11.00

At last, the real thing. Show's producer helpfully stands at the edge of the stage to give the crowd the correct cue to start cheering.

Eurovision entrants Deuce open the show with an energetic run through their competition song. It's a fairly predictable dance number, but with a catchy little organ riff in its favour. Since they didn't even qualify as the UK entry, it seems a bit rich to be expecting to make a successful pop career. Still, things could have been worse - we could've had Sam Fox's band.

11.15

By now the crowd has swelled substantially, but Canons Marsh remains only half full.

Boo Radleys (the band we're ostensibly here to see) launch into their new single. Any hope they might actually play live is immediately dispelled as the opening drum beat pounds out before the drummer has even sat on his stool! Song proves to be less poppy than 'Wake Up Boo!' and gets a rather muted reaction from the kids who are mostly here to see teen-throbs Ultimate Kaos.

11.30

Crowd finally has its cheering and whooping in sync with the broadcasting. Unfortunately 11.30 is news time.

Main item concerns a stricken ferry near Jersey (17 injured) ... Crowd cheers! ... Next up is a serious road accident in Yorkshire ... Crowd waves hands in the air! ... Final item concerns desecration of Fred West's parents' grave ... Crowd hollers ecstatically!

Hmm. Maybe by now I'm so cold I've started hallucinating.

11.45

Boo Radleys perform 'Wake Up Boo!' to a more positive crowd reaction. Gorgeous brass section brings back fond memories of the Teardrop Explodes. Feel a touch warmer at last.

Following the Boo's is a perfunctory run through spot-the-song-game 'Bits and Pieces'. None of the razzamatazz or crowd interaction of the old radio one. Each contestant rather laboriously asked where they come from - surprise answer 'Bristol' elicited from all four contestants.

12.00

Show climaxes with Ultimate Kaos, a sort of '90s version of the Jackson 5. Audience seems split down the middle on this lot. The youngsters defy security attempts to keep them seated and rush the barriers while the older members of the crowd troop off in the opposite direction. A swirling spring wind gives the disconcerting impression that the further we get from the stage the louder the music becomes.

Despite continued presence of dark grey clouds the rain has held off for the entire show.

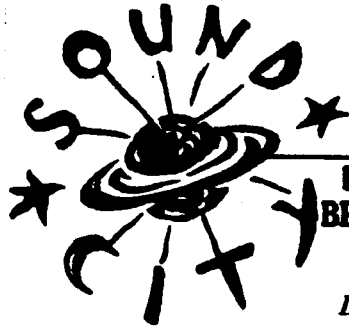
As a launch for Sound City '95 this show felt slightly out of place. The main festival is dominated by 'indie'-style student bands. With the exception of the Boo's the acts featured here were aimed at a completely different audience.

But then this show also launched the One FM roadshow season. Between now and September they'll no doubt be visiting everywhere from Southend to Blackpool and a thousand other tacky seaside resorts in between. Where this half-hearted jamboree of bands miming and low key audience participation fits in with the new look radio one is harder to tell.

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It's still Easter Monday and Peter, Richard, Steve and I are probably somewhere on the M4 wishing that someone would cut out a bit of the trajectory between London and Bristol (say, Swindon for example), but **Simon Lake**, undeterred by his experiences at the Radio One roadshow, heads out for one of the opening night gigs of Sound City.

ORBITAL, SKUNK ANANSIE, DUBWAR



*Playing special
broadcast sets
for Radio 1 FM*

Bristol 95
BRISTOL NEW TRINITY CENTRE
MONDAY 17th APRIL 1995
Tickets £8.00
Doors 6.30pm Show Starts 7.00pm



While Sound City's other main venue, the Anson Rooms, reminds you of nothing more prosaic than a school dining hall, the Trinity is the place for a bit of genuine atmosphere. Set in the heart of a converted old church, the Trinity offers a split level performance space linked by wonderful stone staircases and with lots of little alcoves for those essential between band chilling out sessions.

Sound City has certainly set a buzz among the local music community and the rumours of mass sightings of A+R men may be more than hype. The promoters at the Trinity must certainly have hoped so because they've 'opportunistically' laid on chilled wines at vastly inflated prices. One definitely aimed at the mobile phone crowd for sure, because the punters tonight are far too busy drinking beer and happily ignoring a poster campaign suggesting that anyone caught smoking illegal 'substances' will be ejected instantly. Either this was an empty threat or people were just too stoned to read them.

If the A+R crowd were looking to Dub War for some of the ubiquitous West country trip-hop vibe that's been selling by the bucket load recently they will have been sorely disappointed. Their frontman may have the dreadlocks and the fine soul voice, but the backing band produce a hardcore guitar assault that is totally at odds with all things laid back. In fact Dub War offer a stinging example of the growing collision between speed metal and rap that seems on the increase these days.

Skunk Anansie operate in similar territory, but their provocative singer Skin has given the band a much higher media profile. Whether their belligerent music can take them into the charts remains to be seen, but recent single 'Selling Jesus' is awesome and several other songs in the set are of a similar standard. They can also slow down the pace without losing the intensity that carries the majority of the audience with them.

Headlining act Orbital are totally at odds with the two support bands. There are no

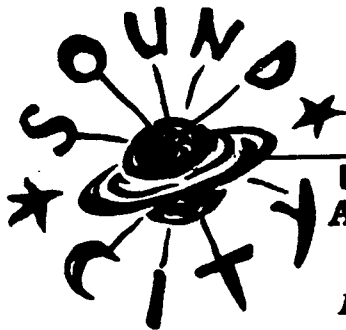
crunching guitar riffs to pogo to and no demonic frontmen (or women) to watch. Instead we get video screens and two balding middle aged men crouched and almost dwarfed by banks of electronic equipment. Hardly a recipe for primetime entertainment you might think, but you'd be wrong. Whether dance music is your thing or not, it's fair to say you have to experience it live to really understand how it works. Bass lines boom out and drum loops are mashed together. The effect is vastly hypnotic and within minutes everyone in the hall is dancing.

Dance music is not only accused of being faceless, but also of lacking in humour. Orbital set out to buck the trend tonight by dropping the chorus from Belinda Carlisle's 'Heaven is a Place on Earth' most incongruously halfway through their own 'Halcyon' and leaving the audience caught totally out of sync - well those that weren't too stoned to notice.

Their set lasts for 90 minutes, an almost non-stop meld of atmospheric melodies, alien soundscapes and hypnotic rhythms. The constraints of the radio schedule means this concert ends unfeasibly early at 10.15, but, that anomaly aside, everyone leaves the hall happy.

Of course by now the A+R men are long gone, no doubt checking out some of the fringe venues in their endless quest to find the next big thing.

ELASTICA, GENE, FIN



*Playing special
broadcast sets
for Radio 1 FM*

**Bristol 95
ANSON ROOMS, BRISTOL
TUESDAY 18th APRIL 1995
Tickets £8.00
Doors 6.30pm Show Starts 7.30pm
Show Finishes 10.00pm**



**IBIP
00137**

Barely recovered from a hard weekend partying, Peter-Fred Thompson discovers to his amazement that there really can be -

THREE GIRLS LIKE ANNE WILSON

I went like a lamb to the slaughter. Tim and Christina had told me all about Bristol being Sound City, and how great the gigs would be - my ear generally being less than close to the ground, this was all news to me, of course - so I said "Sure, why not?". It

was more effort to argue, and anyway, I had no reason to. I didn't know what to expect. The other two were old hands, having been to a Chumbawamba gig some time before, but I was probably in the wrong country or something; I missed it at any rate, which was a pity, since by all accounts it was brilliant. Tim muttered something about people "pogo-ing" or something, but I didn't try too hard to imagine what that meant, so I guess it's my own fault that I was standing in the wrong place at the wrong time when *Elastica* came on.

I probably first heard of *Elastica* in an e-mail from Tommy McClellan, which is remarkable for two reasons: *Elastica* had been the hottest new Indie act for several months already (which shows how un-hip I am); and I've never had another e-mail from Tommy before or since (which shows how hip he is). He made the intriguing comment that the band's lead singer looked like Brighton-based fan Anne Wilson, which prompted me to catch them on Top of the Pops. I had to admit that there was a certain resemblance; the song was pretty good as well, so when *Elastica* was mentioned in the Sound City line-up I was all set.

Just to make sure, I taped "Later, with Jools Holland" when they were on, and although they only did three numbers (of which I saw 2.5, since my tape ran out), their lead singer chatted a bit and displayed an admirable sense of humour.

"Later" also provided me with my first glimpse of their neon logo, which hung tantalisingly over the stage at the Anson Rooms on the big night. Tim, Christina, Simon and I stood around, drinking beer out of plastic glasses, waiting for things to start. Eventually the first of the supporting bands came on, inappropriately named "*Fin*", introduced by a real Radio 1 presenter. Wow! This was it! We were right there, being broadcast live to the nation! Pity *Fin* weren't that great, but hey! the tickets weren't all that expensive. They only played for about half an hour anyway, when (in order to save the radio audience from awkward silences while the next band set up) the action shifted to the gig across town, thoughtfully relayed to us on the PA by the BBC. In the meantime roadies took down *Fin*'s equipment, and set up for the next act, *Gene*.

I don't know how they sounded on the radio, but live they certainly came over much better than *Fin*. The slim, handsome lead singer played to the crowd around the stage, who responded with enthusiasm, leaping up and down and 'bodysurfing' from time to time. I was fascinated by this: every so often someone would jump up on to the upraised hands of the crowd, being tossed around and over and over until they vanished back into the seething morass. Was this a heartening display of trust in their fellow music fans, or were they just out of their brains on something? We were sensibly far enough back not to have anyone dropped on us, but it was fun to watch.

Soon enough *Gene* were off and we were listening to the other gig once more, easily judging it much less exciting than the one we were at. We contemplated getting more drinks, but everyone else seemed to have had the same idea slightly more quickly, and diving into the seething mass around the bar was about as appealing as wading through a crocodile-infested swamp. By this time, of course, the crowd had swelled considerably in anticipation of the main event, although there seemed to be an extraordinary number of people sitting around away from the main hall, giving the impression that they were just hanging out there and hadn't the slightest intention of actually listening to any music.

Back in the hall, the roadies seemed to be running out of things to do, and an air of expectancy was beginning to build. The other gig started to wind down, and suddenly! there they were, three girls and a drummer, all in black, and the presenter saying something to the radio audience which was completely drowned out by the cheers in the hall, and a great surge forward which carries me much nearer to the stage, bodies pressing all around, and straight into the first number and oh SHIT! everyone's jumping up and down and they're DOING IT ON MY TOES!! It wouldn't have been so bad, but it had been a hot day and I was still wearing sandals...so this was "pogo-ing", that sea-like effect at the front I hadn't paid much attention to while the other bands were on. Not that I had anything against jumping up and down, which was the only way to dance given the overcrowding - in fact I wanted to do it myself because the music was so exciting - but I could have done with another six inches between me and the person in front so that they could reliably jump on the floor rather than my aching feet.

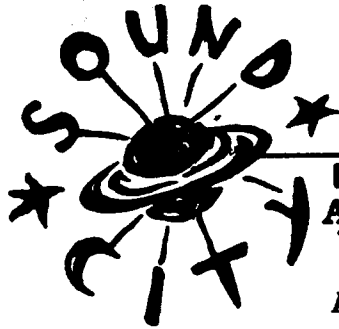
Eventually I developed a technique of pogo-ing in synch with the people around me while pushing against the back in front of me to get some space (just like the people behind me were doing) and was able to devote a bit more attention to the band. Justine, the lead singer and guitarist, introduced each number in her thick London accent, counted down and then launched into it with a fierce energy. She encouraged the pogo-ing by jumping up and down herself from time to time. Donna, the other guitarist, joined in the vocals, while Annie, the bassist, maintained the gazing-at-the-floor position favoured by the breed, while providing the heavy rhythmic base of the songs. Justin drummed in an energetic but fairly unassuming way. Even though some of the riffs did seem strangely familiar (hints of the Stranglers at times, perhaps?), the playing was tight and the songs were fresh and amusing and had the crowd really going. Eventually the singing had to stop while the presenter signed off the broadcast, and then the show just carried on. Justine pointed out that it was now OK to say "fuck!", which everyone did, of course.

After a few more numbers, the band waved and left the stage. The crowd went wild, shouting and stamping, and generally making it pretty clear that they'd better come back and play some more, so they did. This happened several times, and finally the lights came up and the PA delivered that kind of recorded music that says "go home now". I staggered towards the door, and eventually encountered the rest of my party, who had known what was likely to happen and wisely pushed *back* when everyone else pushed forward. Had I really allowed myself to be carried into the heart of the crowd? they asked. Yes, I said, of course, that's what I wanted. Like hell.

But, so what. It was a great gig, especially *Elastica*. And yes, they did look like Anne Wilson. Sort of. Well, they were dead sexy, wore black and grooved to Indie Rock; that's close enough.



SUEDE, SLEEPER, ASH



*Playing special
broadcast sets
for Radio 1 FM*

Bristol 95

ANSON ROOMS, BRISTOL

THURSDAY 20th APRIL 1995

Tickets £8.00

Doors 6.30pm Show Starts 7.30pm

Show Finishes 10.00pm



Next Tim Goodrick receives a

MESSAGE FROM A PLANET JACK NAMED

ULS
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EP
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If this is Ash, surely it should be Wednesday. No, that was weeks ago, and this week Wednesday was my Soundless City day. Thursday. Anson Rooms. Again. Hardly recovered from finding myself too deep in the pogo section of the mob at the Elastica concert. (I can't think of it as an audience. Audiences are what I sit in, quietly, motionless, at a gig by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra). Where was I, oh yes, dazed and confused, awaiting the arrival on stage of Ash, genuine Teenage Sensation, still at school and producing crazed thrashes like Kung Fu and Jack Names The Planets. It is rumoured that they had to turn down the chance to appear with Pearl Jam because they had too much homework. Amusing, and quite possibly true, but homework doesn't seem to have stopped them writing some great songs and their youth seems to imbue them with a manic energy. Indeed, at one point I thought they were going to play the whole of their half-hour long set non-stop. However, they paused after the third song, more to give the pogoing audience a rest than themselves, I suspect. All in all, as exciting live as they are on their mini-album 'Trailer'. Hopefully, they won't burn out before they reach twenty.

Sleeper are one of the many excellent female-fronted bands that seem to have sprung up recently. Their brand of punk pop combines under-your-skin tunes, witty lyrics and hard-driving energy. Yet another band that had the audience trying to pogo through the floor of the Anson rooms (I'm sure the architect didn't plan on having a few hundred people jumping up and down simultaneously in this first floor room). They have already had hits with 'Inbetweeners' and 'Las Vegas' and they delivered many more potential singles in their set which seemed to be over in less time than it takes the Tories to break a promise. (Oops, am I in danger of revealing my political leanings?)

Kingmaker, who were playing over at the New Trinity Centre on the other side of Bristol, were relayed across as our interval band between Sleeper and Suede. (Everything was being broadcast live on the Radio One evening sessions and so as one band finished at one venue another had to be ready to start at the other.) I'd just bought the new Kingmaker album and was trying to convince the others (Peter-Fred, Christina and mainly Simon, Christina's brother) that they were quite a good band, really. They were much improved. They were writing really good songs now, actually. Yes, their set did seem to be going on forever. Yes, everyone was desperately waiting for Suede, but that was hardly Kingmaker's fault. I had to duck my head in acute embarrassment when they did a cover of a tacky old Queen song. Fortunately for me it was their last.

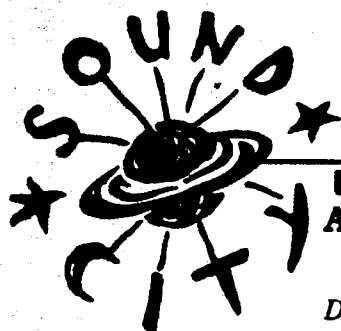
I had been very vocal in my confident opinion that there would be no pogoing to Suede, so we'd be ok in the thick of it. I wouldn't mind if I'd been just a bit wrong, but as soon as 'We are the pigs' started up the whole crowd went volcano. I had hoped to see what the new guitarist was like in the flesh. Could he really be as young as the kids in Ash? But he kept his head down and his long hair completely covered his face. He certainly played as well as Bernard Butler, but seemed to be beginning to stamp his own personality onto the sound as well. Meanwhile, Brett Anderson was doing fancy trick with the microphone. At the end of one song he hurled it to the ceiling and made a nice catch. In another he swung it round his head on an ever increasing length of its lead and ended by letting it wrap itself dramatically round his body. I did notice, though, that when the lights dimmed at the end of the song, he had an awful job untangling himself.

At the end of their set the group managed to make one major blunder. Suede, like everyone else, played their last number to end at the ten o'clock deadline for the finish of the Radio One transmission. Unlike everyone else, however, they didn't go off and wait to be called back on for encores. Instead, after a few seconds break, and an announcement, inaudible over the cheering, went into two more songs. When they did eventually leave the stage most of the audience seemed to think that this was the end of their normal set and were clapping and stamping for more. When they failed to reappear the ecstatic adulation turned to boos. Oh, the fickleness of the fan.

Like the rest of the evening concerts I attended at Sound City, this one was hugely enjoyable. All the more so for having three first class acts crammed into such a short space of time. And, despite my love of home comforts and soft beds, the thrill of all these live performances has got me thinking that Glastonbury might not be out of the question for me this year...

PULP, DREADZONE, THE BLUETONES

*Playing special
broadcast sets
for Radio 1 FM*



Bristol 95

ANSON ROOMS, BRISTOL

FRIDAY 21st APRIL 1995

Tickets £10.00

Doors 8.00pm Show Starts 10.15pm

Show Finishes 1.00am



Christina Lake finds it's her turn to write about rock heroes in :

Better Than Fiction

Friday night at the Ansons rooms seemed a bit different. It wasn't just that it was later in the evening, darker, harder to park. It was something far less subtle - all the audience were sitting down. "Just like students," Peter-Fred marvelled as we strolled in, giants among the circles of people, able to see the stage directly for the first time. "How come they all only have three friends?" asked Tim worriedly. "Just like us," I voiced, wondering if some psychic force were at work, or whether Tim was simply too short-sighted to spot the larger clusters. We found an empty patch of ground, and sat down ourselves. "Do you think we'll have to pretend to be students?" I wondered. "Mature students," said Simon, looking at us sceptically from his vantage point of being the only one of us under thirty. "At least with John Peel introducing the bands, I won't be the oldest person here tonight," said Tim. It was about five to ten when we sat down and a few minutes later the Radio One broadcast being played through the speakers announced the end of the previous show, and at the magic words - "Now we go over live to the Anson Rooms, Bristol" everyone in the room scrambled to their feet simultaneously and rushed to the stage, as if they were going to be on television. Or maybe they expected to see John Peel there playing records. If that were the case, they were to be disappointed. After the first tune, JP explained that he was actually broadcasting from a trailer in the carpark and would have to put on a particularly long record before each band came on and run up four flights of stairs in order to introduce them.

Ten minutes later The Bluetones appeared, apparently with the aid of John Peel, but I missed his cameo spot, probably because he just bobbed on stage right instead of striding to the centre like Jo Wiley had on the previous nights to bawl over the screams in best war correspondent fashion ("This is Jo Adey reporting from Sound City, Bristol) (He also didn't tell us to drag in all our friends from the bar in case they missed out on the next Oasis!). The Bluetones looked distinctly relaxed compared to the bands we had seen earlier in the week. Perhaps it was the lack of pressure to run their set to synchronise with another gig on the other side of the city or perhaps it was just their style. In fact, I was beginning to have some doubts about their style. For a start, there were people next to us dancing rather extravagantly, and one of them was wearing minnie mouse ears on her head. Secondly, people in the marginally pogoing central area in front of the stage seemed to be waving flowers above their heads. Knowing nothing about the Bluetones I didn't know if this was the sort of thing people usually did at their gigs or another manifestation of the rather wacky turn the night was taking. Given that when a flower arrived on stage the lead singer simply swatted it off him like an insect, I began to suspect the latter. I decided to forget about the audience and concentrate on getting into the Bluetones' music. Or rather, to analyse why it wasn't doing much for me. It was good to dance to, well sung and played as far as I could judge, not lacking in verve, but not really enthusing me. Maybe it was the lead singers sixties hair cut, or the blues connotation of their name or the fact that you can't dance very well with a plastic pint glass in your hands. I drained the last few drops, let it fall to the ground in the environmentally caring manner of the rest of the audience and grooved on down. This seemed to do the trick and I enjoyed the rest of the set, though suspect I will never turn into a big Bluetones fan.

After a short gap of normal John Peel music (a speeded-up version of Wuthering Heights, some oddity John had picked up in a local record shop and a track from the naffly named Avon Calling late '70s compilation of Bristol music), it was time for John to put on an open-ended dub track and do his sprint back to the live arena. This time, I did spot him and just had time to note that the band he was ushering on stage were an interesting-looking lot, when John introduced them as Pulp. This caused a certain amount of consternation, since Pulp as the headline band were assumed to be coming on last. "Yes, Pulp," said their front man before diving into their first number. Tim behind me was looking agitated, aware that we were too far forward into the pogo zone for the main band, but I was just watching their singer mesmerised (if you can be mesmerised whilst dancing frantically?). He was so effortlessly stylish - the way he moved, the way he commanded the crowd, the way his band acted as a still backdrop for him. Whatever had been missing from the Bluetones, Pulp quite definitely had it in spades. All this I had a chance to observe in relative comfort throughout the first song before word made it out to the bar that Pulp were on and people began burrowing their way through to the front of the stage. Even so it never grew untenable as in the manic pogoing that greeted Elastica. And for once I did not want to retreat to the relative comfort of a danceable space, but crammed myself in with the rest of the crowd to watch what Pulp were going to do next. Jarvis Cocker, as I found out the singer was called (though disappointingly no relation to Vic Cocker Managing Director of Severn Trent Water, or his lesser known brother Joe), turned out to be the most loquacious of the performers we saw. In keeping with the narrative orientation of Pulp's songs, he told stories, gave background information and generally attempted to communicate with the audience. He began with three new songs not on their album, giving the story behind each before starting out. "This song is about

an item of clothing. I wonder if anyone is wearing one tonight?" The audience shouted out yes eagerly. "You don't even know what I'm going to say yet," Jarvis pointed out. The item in question was a pencil skirt, and since no-one threw one on to the stage they probably weren't. Unlike The Bluetones, Jarvis did take account of the items thrown at him. He picked up a flower and held it to his face, admired the embroidery on a large pair of pants (though he did have the wisdom not to engage in dialogue with the loud-voiced man shouting "Get your clothes off!", then, in desperation "Get your tie off!"). The new songs did not seem to dampen the audiences enthusiasm and were so well paced that wild pogoing alternated with rapt attention to the slower passages. After the new songs, Pulp went back into some of their hits and I found my legs screaming in agony as I pogoed too long to "Do you remember the first time?" This was perfect, I decided as I caught my breath. Bringing Pulp on before Dreadzone seemed just then so right for the dynamic of the evening, and so right for me personally as I was much nearer the front than I would ever have been if they had come on when expected. The only serious flaw to this whole arrangement was that we were in no position to get an encore, the traditional off the air bonus to the local audience from the last band of the night. But even that I didn't care about. Pulp had delivered the goods and as on the other two nights I was just pleased to have found so much good music. More than that, I knew the evening had changed me from someone who quite liked Pulp records into a potentially serious fan of the band (or, let's face it, of Jarvis Cocker!). Pulp went off to much applause, any demands for more drowned out by the resumption of the John Peel show.

The audience in the hall thinned out, leaving behind it a tidal wrack of squashed plastic mugs. Many of them never came back. By the time Dreadzone came on stage there must have been less than half the numbers in for Pulp. This meant that the Dreadzone set took on a more relaxed partyish atmosphere. Instead of having a limited amount of space in which to jump up and down vertically whilst hoping not to land on someone else's toes, there was room to really get on down and dance. Dreadzone played a booming, resounding dub reggae, complete with video images and sampled sounds. One of the first songs took the sounds of the traditional ceremonial music of England and played it against a video of a fast moving montage of English heritage images of castles and villages to produce what I imagined could be thought of as English roots music. Another was introduced as "A tune about pasta" and turned out to be based on spaghetti western images and music. Some were more political featuring clips of protesters against the criminal justice bill. After the tension and crowd adulation of the big name acts it felt right to wind down to this true party music, watching the images flicker by on the video screen and breathing in a thick miasma of dope. Sound City had been a bit contrived with its split second radio-oriented switches from band to band, but had despite that worked well for me. I had found more music to be enthusiastic about than I could remember in a long time. It had been like one of the big festivals but without the attendant inconveniences, and most importantly, with the much improved acoustics of a hall over an open air stage. With Dreadzone, I had almost forgotten that we were on the radio at all until they came back after the 1pm end to the John Peel show and made the by then mandatory comment that now they could say what they liked. They gave us two more tunes, then we rolled out into the cold night air, more a trickle than a crowd, sated rather than euphoric, ready to sleep extremely well.

In between the big names evening extravaganzas, Tim and Simon had been checking out what was going down in the park in a dedicated quest for real understanding of the local music scene. **Tim Goodrick** reports.

DANCING IN THE PARK

In the centre of Bristol is Castle Green Park and 1FM erected a gigantic marquee on it to house the stage that would showcase the talents of local bands for the week. As I'd taken the whole of Sound City week off work most afternoon's were spent in the park in the haze of other people's strange smelling cigarettes.

As might be expected, the music ranged from crap to great, passing through 'I can't stand this but I acknowledge that some people might like it and it is probably good music' and 'I think this is highly enjoyable but it may not be very good'. Some bands were outstanding, with most of the highlights coming on Friday (although, I feel certain I would have enjoyed The Boys From County Hell, who I had to miss due to reasons I'll come to later).

The first group encountered were something of a disappointment. They were sixties throwbacks, as a lot of groups are these days, but whereas groups like The Boo Radley's and Oasis acknowledge their influences and build something special and new from them, this group, Modesty Blaise, simply seemed to be copying the besuited sixties style. We were so bored that we went off to the shops after a couple of numbers.

I'm not sure exactly when it was, but at some point during the changeovers a really pitiful acoustic act came on (you know, the sort who'd tempt you to leave the pub without finishing your pint if they appeared in your local bar). However few numbers they did, it was far too many. A couple of half-way decent bands, Doyenne and Universal Joint (whose name pretty much summed up the atmosphere around the marquee), put in the sort of performances I'd been expecting (ie. good pub band sound). Can't remember a terrific amount about the music, but I think I enjoyed it at the time. Had to leave as the last band, Me, was coming on as everything was running very late and we had other plans (Elastica etc at the Anson Rooms).

I took a day off on Wednesday and was back down on Thursday. Caught a small slice of The Blades, hard-rocking pop, before we had to consider our cleft stick. I would have liked to have seen The Boy's From County Hell, who were due up next, but Teenage Fanclub were scheduled to be doing a live gig at the Virgin Megastore in the Galleries shopping precinct nearby. It was no contest really, a group I knew I liked and had missed the previous evening versus a group I had never heard but thought I might like. Off we toddled to the megastore where we found, embarrassingly, that we had to stand between the Country Music and Easy Listening sections. The Fannies arrived very late but at least we'd got a position at the front and didn't have our view blocked by the giant duck that was in the audience (no, I hadn't been smoking anything, there really was a giant duck, honestly). The Fannies apologised, offering some feeble excuse about spilling their dinner and having to clean it up. I learned later that they had also been late for a gig in another megastore where

they claimed they had gone to the wrong shop!

The first thing they did before playing was to adjust all the equipment that their rodie had just spent half an hour or so setting up. Still, I suppose when you're continually on the verge of megastardom you've got to do something. They played a good set, indulged in merry banter with the audience and plugged their new album which is due out soon. They even brought Grange Hill into their chat, which I took delight in telling Christina how much she'd have enjoyed it if she'd had the chance to be there.

Back at Castle Park and the collective minds of Bristol seem to be a little fogged. We were expecting a band called High Coin to be on after The Boys From County Hell and, according to Venue, the local listings magazine, they did appear. However, an unbilled group, the name of which I didn't catch properly but sounded something like Days On, did come on and play a set. Now, it is possible that we missed two bands (and two changeovers) while we were away seeing Teenage Fanclub, but it seems unlikely. Whoever they really were, Days On were crap as were the next band, Blue Ice, a heavy metal outfit that one can only hope will sink without trace under its own weight. I don't dislike heavy metal per se, I judge each band on its merits, but Blue Ice were so boring that I couldn't be bothered to scratch the leaden surface to see if there was a glint of any gold beneath.

What a change when Rita Lynch came on. Female fronted rock with a bit of bite and excitement. The closest band to them in sound seemed to me to be Echobelly, although others have compared them to Patti Smith. Whatever, they were great. Not so the final band, Joker's Wild, who though streets ahead of Blue Ice, did seem to come from the same area of the periodic table.

Friday, although a bit chillier weatherwise, was far and away the best day musically. It was also the one on which bands seemed to take the longest time for changeovers and by the end overran the five o'clock curfew by almost an hour. We had to stay until the end that day because famous Dr. Who New Adventures author and part-time Bristol SF group member, Jim Mortimore, was sort of in Mammal, the last band scheduled to appear.

The first band we saw suited the weather, they were Cold. Lively indie pop that put me in a good mood straight away. The sun came out while they were on, which cheered me up some more even though I'd forgotten to bring a hat once again and, being completely bald, my head suffers excessively in the sun. I tucked into my picnic lunch during the next band, Raka, yet another one with a female lead singer, where do they all come from? Again excellent pop with soul. I'd have been up dancing if I hadn't been eating. Well, perhaps not, but the thought was there and my feet were twitching. Nerxt up were RSVP, a Bristol bhangrat band. This was the first time I'd heard more than a few quick snatches of this music and, even if I wasn't bowled over by it, I found it interesting and very listenable. What probably distracted me a bit were various dogs leaping over me to go and sniff or attack other dogs. It wasn't until a fight nearly broke out between two owners that sense began to prevail and they made some effort to keep their animals under control.

Next up were Henry and Louis, to be followed by More Rockers but, as they were affiliated, they did their acts together. More Rockers have a growing reputation as the pioneers of a fusion of jungle and dub reggae and will probably follow in the footsteps of Massive Attack, Tricky and Portishead to become big hits nationally. Although I joked to Simon, who was with me, about not understanding the music and kept going on inanely about the number of times they mentioned their name in their songs, I found that the music began to work its effect and half-way through the set I was hooked. Brilliant stuff.

And finally, Mammal. They had to be good because the other event on offer was a pop quiz at the Watershed, hosted by John Peel and pitting the likes of Jarvis Cocker from Pulp plus various Radio One people against a team from the Guardian. Although we'd realised that our friend Jim probably wouldn't be there, he was responsible for some of the graphics for the band, we still felt obliged to support them. We made our way into the marquee to get up close to the group as we knew it would be a visual as well as aural experience. It was lucky we did, as for the first time that day, the tent filled up and it would have been difficult to see the stage from outside. The blend of visuals, dance, decoration, computers and percussion made for an enthralling experience. Music, dance and graphics flowed seamlessly together in an exhilarating spectacle. Altogether the best event on the Green that week. A marvellous way to end.

Balloons Over Bristol 7

Credits

Wake Up Bristol	Simon Lake
Orbital Sightings	Simon Lake
Three Girls Like Anne Wilson	Peter Fred Thompson
Message from a Planet Jack Named	Tim Goodrick
Better than fiction	Christina Lake
Dancing in the Park	Tim Goodrick

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