



SPIREA X

QUEEN MARGARET UNION, GLASGOW

SO much for the City Of Culture. There's always been a divide in Glasgow between blue-eyed soul bands and guitar popsters, but the former have dominated in the last couple of years with the contrived and irritating Wet Wet Wet and Hue And Cry at the top of the heap. Since the mid-Eighties boom that gave us Primal Scream, The Pastels, The Vaselines, The Soup Dragons *et al*, as far as guitar pop goes, Glasgow has been more like a cultural desert than a cultural capital.

Under these circumstances, it's not surprising that Jim Beattie is being treated like a home-coming hero. The man who co-wrote early Primal Scream classics like "Velocity Girl" and "It Happens" hasn't been sighted since he left the group over two years ago. Rumours abounded — he'd become a hermit. He'd become a house-husband. He was in prison. He'd changed his name to John Squire and bought a wig. In fact, he'd been writing songs, biding his time. Two years in the making, this is Spirea X.

A fog of dry ice and blippy spotlights precede an intro tape, a spacey techno groove thang that keeps on building as the five band members walk on one at a time. As it reaches a crescendo on walks Jim, all six feet plus of him, and the crowd are shouting their heads off. Fists in the air. This is a debut gig, for crying out loud. Wild. First up is "Spirea Rising", a chugging groove based on an old Primals surf instrumental. This, however, is very 1990. And seeing as the youth of Glasgow look more Manc these days than the youth of Manchester, it goes down a treat. Razor sharp fuzz guitar cuts through the funk soup. There's a cowbell break. It's pretty good. "Funky Nation" (fergawdsake) is similar, only this time Jim and Judith, she of the Mary Quant hairdo, coo sweetly over the ensuing din that somehow mixes Sly And The Family Stone and Subway Sect. Directly in front of me, the bassist and rhythm guitarist, both pony-tailed, face each other and concoct the heady dance brew, supercool, oblivious to the other Spireas. As a group, they look unlikely, untogether, and perfect.

"Revolution", the maybe single, sounds like nothing less than Paris Angels with its incessant wah-wah attack and dreamy boy/girl vocals. And then, just to show it's not all straight outta Funksville, there's "Jet Pilot", a harmony-laden gem with Jim and Judith's voices recalling the toked-up vagueness of "You Made Me Realise", but with the pristine pop vision of Primal Scream '85/'86 intact. Four songs, and that's yer lot.

In the wake of Primal Scream's recent elevation to true pop star status, Spirea X appearing alongside them on "Top Of The Pops" seems only fair. On the strength of this teasing debut, it seems Jim Beattie has lost none of his songwriting ability, and what's more he's found a safe-as-houses, liquid rhythm section and a damn good singer to boot.

Some pop rebirth. Jim's amp has got "guitar hero" scrawled on it. Spirea X are stars already.

BOB STANLEY