

SPIREA X

THE TRADES CLUB, LEEDS

HAVING heard reports of Jim Beattie's gargantuan ego, I'd half expected him to arrive onstage in a gold Rolls Royce, clad in silver lurex and flanked by beautiful models. It comes as something of a shock, then, to see the self-styled Scottish Rock Messiah shuffling around in a tee-shirt, *humping his gear*.

Once we've all calmed down, however, it strikes that Beattie's humility and Spirea's general lack of visual flair could, in fact, be an elaborate ploy. One can imagine them plotting now: "Look, lads, if we go out there and look like electricians, and have a light show borrowed from the local table lamp emporium, we'll be really on to something. They'll actually concentrate on the *music*, and seeing how spectral, incandescent and utterly brilliant it actually is they'll think we're ace!"

It almost works. Spirea's music is a garden of delights, for sure, nurtured from the same precious bag of McGuinn's seeds that has recently given us stunning albums from The Orchids and The Field Mice.

"Chlorine Dread" is an aqueous nirvana even without the Stax horns of the vinyl incarnation, "Speed Reaction" boasts all the zip and cold refreshment of a winter's cycle ride, and "Sunset Dawn" is simply glacial, even if it does steal from Coco's awesome "Rose of Cimmaron".

The trouble is, Spirea X never break the mood. Songs veer from *mild* euphoria to *mild* melancholia, never truly scaling the heights of abandon or ploughing the pits of despair. After a while, the intrinsic contentment in Spirea's music starts to grate.

Spirea X need to broaden out, roughen up, improve their presentation (the girl singer in the shiny Star Trek suit is a notable exception). Until then, Jim Beattie will just have to hitch a ride in Bobby Gillespie's Roller. Beats lugging your amps, eh Jim?

DAVE SIMPSON