

# THROWING MUSES LEICESTER UNIVERSITY

IT MAY be a tad predictable to criticise Throwing Muses for not being so good without Tanya Donnelly, but there's something missing from their sound tonight, and no prizes for guessing what it is. The album didn't obviously suffer from Tanya's absence, but live, without her intricate guitar melodies and eccentric harmonies which have always made the Muses' songs so individual and addictive, they sound like a pale imitation of their former selves.

They're asking for trouble, really, because they choose to play a lot of old material which needs the second guitar and backing vocals, but less than half of the new album. 'Counting Backwards' and 'Two Step' suffer particularly badly, and making do without when the guitar or vocal parts are too difficult makes you feel a bit cheated, frankly.

Too much of tonight's performance sounds like a bunch of session musicians playing dull cover versions of Muses favourites – all the edges are rounded off, and all the epileptic rhythms, the dynamics and the complexities are submerged in a one-dimensional thrash through the set.

Kristin Hersh looks faintly ridiculous behind her huge Heavy Metal Fender Scumsucker guitar, especially considering she looks only slightly bigger than a Barbie doll from where we're standing, and slightly less active onstage.

There are exceptions – 'Hate My Way' is still great, mainly because it hasn't had to be changed significantly from the original. But the only really affecting song is 'Pearl', which is so obviously personal it's almost painful to listen to. Kristin seems so reluctant, yet compelled, to sing that you feel like you're intruding on someone's private confession box (along with 500 other people, naturally).

Once they can gear their performances to what they've got, rather than what they're missing, Throwing Muses will, no doubt, be a great live band as a three-piece. Tonight felt like they were firing on only three cylinders.

**Johnny Cigarettes**