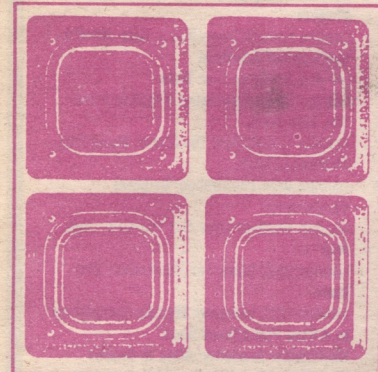


# GUT ROCKING TONIGHT



## LIVE

EDITED BY SIMON WILLIAMS

### BELLY

#### MANCHESTER ACADEMY

"I'VE BEEN told to tell you," wails new Belly bassist Gail Greenwood, bubbling with enthusiasm and first night nerves: "YOU'RE ALL A BUNCH OF WANKERS!" A thousand punters choke on an insult decidedly out of character for a band who normally embrace sweet, childlike naivety and gush honeyed melodies from every sensitive pore.

Backstage later, Gail – victim of her bandmates' gag – will lie on the floor screaming in horror when told that 'wanker', sadly, is definitely not a compliment. See, beneath Belly's alluring veneer there's elfish mischief at work. Onstage and off, they feed you saccharine and strychnine, in the nicest possible way.

These days, it seems, if you've served time in a previous band you have to carry it with you like a prison record, to be continually compared with and judged in terms of previous efforts. Tanya Donelly is a million steps ahead of her shadow, liberated from a band where she was allowed little input. Throwing Muses, in retrospect, gagged, confined and quashed her confidence, most of her talent was downplayed and overshadowed. It isn't now – Belly is Tanya Donelly's band.

Looking sophisticated in black silk trousers and bohemian top, she offers her broadest grin before launching into 'Someone To Die For'. Working the melody with disturbing emotion, suffocating on the intensity of the delivery and gasping on the final words: "Don't you have someone you'd die for?"

Belly – in a time where mood, intelligence and elegance have surpassed pure kick-ass dynamics – have now discovered the missing live element. Already offering nearly everything that's so desperately needed to infuse the scene, (y'know, charismatic, lavish, emotive pop), they've now brought in the frivolous rock factor. Gail Greenwood is a fusion of Kim Gordon, Suzi Quatro and L7's Jennifer Finch. Ex-member of Boneyard and first time traveller to these shores, she provides further mystery by inciting



**Hot licks:** Tanya gives the 'wankers' a dose of saccharine and strychnine. Inset: Gail 'Muggins' Greenwood

flailing thrash rock comparisons.

Gail is an awesome sidekick, swinging her hair, lunging around the stage, pouring out gruff yet tuneful backing vocals in accompaniment to Tanya's vast array of affected melodies. Belly now have all sides covered.

Songs like 'Full Moon, Empty Heart' capture and incorporate all their

resilient components in four minutes of absolute bliss, easing in with unaccompanied high-pitched yodels which slide to a groaning whisper before bursting into life with a collision of distorted guitars and fragmented drums. Rock? You bet.

Tanya recreates that folk/rock crossover in the way Patti Smith did with songs like 'Set Me Free', rocking out to 'Slow Dog' and the glorious 'Feed The Tree' only to follow it with the timid love anthem 'Stay', which she pre-emptively with a cheery "lighters out".

They're dragged back for two encores, (practically unheard of in these mediocre times): 'Trust In Me', the sleazy snake song from *The Jungle Book*, which she hisses with all the appropriate venom, and 'Dusted', their delirious debut single.

Considering that this is only the fourth time Gail and Tanya have been in the same room together, it's the first night of the tour and they've called us all wankers, Belly encapsulated our desires and enraptured us all.

Someone To Die For? Probably.

Gina Morris

erm ... Yelly anybody?



PICTURES: CHRIS HUGHES



Pupils 'n' thrills 'n' Belly...