



THROWING MUSES / THE SUNDAYS

PORTSMOUTH POLYTECHNIC

PERHAPS your imagination does not coincide with mine, but this was a shark in a snowstorm. The first night of the potential tour of the century saw neither culmination nor catastrophe. It wasn't animal — more humane, chaste. It was almost, goddammit to hell, cerebral. A stingray in amber. But not quite. The Sundays made me think sadness puts the pin into happiness. About which more later. Throwing Muses rocked. They were raucous. I told them so. They said good. About which more later.

We were near the sea and the waves nearly crashed and the boats nearly flew and some, if not all, of the stonks skimmed. It was very nearly truly great. I must make that clear. Bathos is the ugly daughter of irony, but she knows a trick or two and

she can carry a tune. What I mean is it was very nearly truly great. That's what. A sneeze could've swung it. We all fall down. There was something tentative. Well of course there was. It's just a door opening, no call for battering rams.

Perhaps the very *notion* of this double bill was a tough act to follow. Tonight simply confirmed, validated, the making of history. That's not bad, is it? What comes next is dogs in the belfry, butterflies under strobes, all the eaves. This was the diving-board. We built it. We should know. The Sundays looked before they leaped, then pulled off the impossible with customary modest perfection. The Muses flared, bristled, God bless them eternally. They didn't play to their strengths, but they played to the gallery and that was kind of what we needed.

Everything has gone like a clockwork dream for The Sundays. They have the magic. Hard fact, easy to swallow. The understated guitars spirited Harriet Wheeler's implausibly nimble vocal volte-faces into an embracing stypitic stratosphere. They just sound wonderful. They sound lovely. I could try a million words but that's what would transpire. Like — sometimes in the happiest moments you realise you will undoubtedly be sad again, *sometime*. That much is certain. You curse yourself for knowing it. She asks what's the matter and you say nothing. But you know it. F***. At their best (they have yet to *not get away with* stumbling) The Sundays cry out that it works the other way too. The highest accolade.

A very stupid man from Portsmouth reckons they're The Cocteau Twins doing Smiths covers, but he's bigger than me. All the buzz about The Sundays is entirely justified — they are fresh, special, and spellbinding. Tonight "My Finest Hour" is again a pinnacle, and new songs like "Skin And Bone" and an encore that could conceivably be entitled "It's Hard To Get Sleep In My House", are breathtaking. Oh yes, all the old adjectives. Trust them.

"Sweet", say Throwing Muses of The Sundays, "so sweet you wanna kiss them." Throwing Muses are a bad-assed rock'n'roll death machine on a grubby one-way ticket to hell. Tonight, anyway. They *rasp*, tonight. Gosh. The effect is weird. Most Kristin Hersh songs contain about 57 chords. To hear them raced through and roared out like this is something else altogether. Really rather fun. Eighty per cent of the set is from "Hunkpapa", which I am told is the name of a Red Indian tribe. Sorry, perhaps you knew that. I didn't. Neither did I know that Kristin's son, Dylan, has changed his name to Frank. Neither does *she* know *why*.

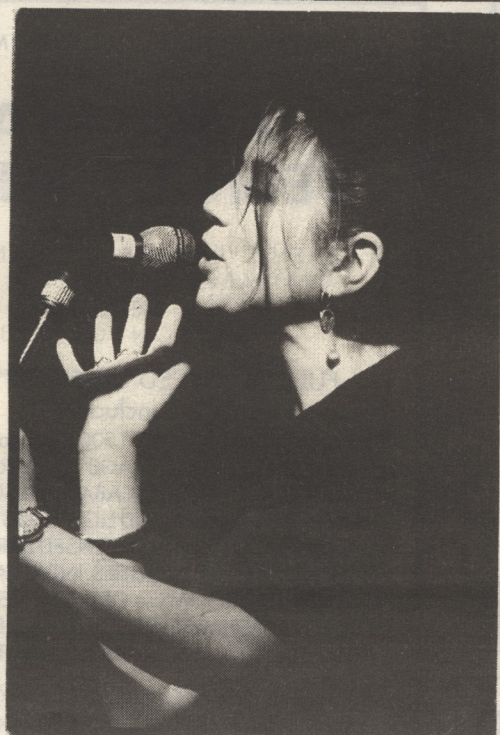
"Fall Down" and "Take" both leave lovebites on the jugular, but for veterans like myself it's the likes of "Soap And Water" which splinter the walking-stick. An encore of "Vicky's Box" and "Santa Claus" is sublime, Kristin in savage voice. I attempt to explain the lyric of the former to my companion and end up agreeing that, okay, so maybe sperm on a windscreen isn't a lot like a pigeon on a tyre. You win some.

The new songs sound much more dynamic when the Muses are breathing this vigorously, but what I wouldn't have shagged blindfold for a blast of "Colder". Also worth mentioning is the metamorphosis of global rugcutter Tanya Donelly from sonic wallflower to searing Hendrix reincarnation. She hits on some astonishing noises. It's a plus, kids.

For the shy, retiring Sundays the earth has a tattoo on its chest saying "Inheritance". For Throwing Muses, chaos and order as ever squabble intriguingly. Genius this complex never *could* swan into a ballroom. So not "Oh blood of my soul" *this* time.

I'll save that for The Town & Country Club. I mean, I won't be writing about it, but I expect I'll whisper it out loud a fair few times. A shark in a snowstorm indeed. It was very nearly that truly great. Hope, crystallisation, more hope. . .

CHRIS ROBERTS



SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL