

Lives extra!

NECROMANCY/ HOLLYWOOD SEX/ LUNATIC FRINGE Bristol

JOHN PEEL recently observed that there was a lack of rowdiness in most of the music produced these days. The first

two groups on this bill were ready and willing to inject that ingredient into their performances, but in the process forgot the rest of the elements that distinguish the loud and amusing from the special.

Lunatic Fringe acted and appealed to themselves and

their followers. They teetered on the edge of chaos in much the same way as the ripped and torn punks, some of whom indulged in their dodgem dancing and teetered on the edge of nasty violence. The first two songs raised a smile due to surprise that the playing never fell completely apart, but the novelty wore off quickly: Welcome Einsturzende Punk Gruppen!

Hollywood Sex don't mess about. It's a relentless 4/4 beat

for them, changing the accent from a basis of cartwheeling drum patterns from their precise percussionist, with pumping bass and a Geordie-influenced karate-chop guitar.

But they deal with some interesting subject matter (sex and the Mafia, for example) while their vocalist makes brave efforts to overcome the problem of the Dingwalls pillar, stuck helpfully in the middle of the stage. He's been over-exposed to Murphy and Jagger videos, however, and in the end the whole show seems contrived; eye-liner, hooded lids and all.

By contrast, Necromancy aren't so outwardly extrovert on stage but the quartet's power has an emphatic muscularity. The music is awash with familiar reference points post-77, yet never succumbing to slavish imitation or forgetting the factors of economy, melody, dynamics and space. The name-checks could span the experimentation in genres Gothic, Glam, German or Grotesque, but Necromancy can use humour, grandeur and romance which gives them the potential to out-shine the Danse Society, Sex Gang Children or Blood and Roses ilk of this world.

There are still some problems to iron out, mainly centring around presentation as (at the moment) the group don't 'project' and the inventive song arrangements sometimes give rise to lapses in accuracy.

But Necromancy are at that exciting stage, displaying the flowering of life and promise: The enthusiastic drums, the probing bass, the dentist-intensity/chiming guitar and the sweep of synthesiser create a giddy rush which is a joy to catch and irresistible.

DAVE MASSEY

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NECROMANCY

THE MYSTERY captured at last! Three songs which finally indicate on tape the true grandeur of Bristol's most Epic quartet.

'Sackcloth and Ashes' pushes out a diamond-hard pulse with rasping/chiming guitar and a detailed planning of massive impact and intricacy. 'The Haven' haunts, protects, burrows and broods, until opening out into a frightening display of power and unity. The third song has no title, but gives plenty of clues and is close to being commercial. Dramatic from the beginning, breathless in its honesty, it brings out visual memories, with no deception. A true waltz for the witches. Demo of the year.



SCREAMING DEAD/ NECROMANCY

Bristol

ON PAPER, a gig that could so easily be an evening for the children of the Damned, dedicated to No Future. In practice, a showing of two bands where it was readily possible to see who was more dead than alive.

Necromancy go from strength to strength, dramatic from the beginning with the diamond-hard pulse of 'Sackcloth And Ashes' and the stop/go fireworks of 'The Crow'. Necromancy represent a true waltz for the witches, and if there's any spark of imagination lurking in record company A & R depts, they should sign this lot up soon.

In a more tolerant mood, I might have found the Screaming Dead to be fun. But as they stand, they've too many debts to pay, from the jagged New York overtones, pseudo - Clash rebel ruses, Zal Cleminson antics from the guitarist and hammy horror fixations. There were too many loose ends to trip over.

One ray of hope is that it's the newer songs, particularly those from the 'Night Creatures' EP, that gell together and give less prominence to the routine rock and roll route. I'd even give some ear-time to an older song, 'Western Front', with it's eerie 'ghost from the trenches' backing vocals - but the circle is unenviably squared by the knicked 'Born To Be Wild' lick of 'Kings Of Kings' and a hoary version of 'Paint It Black'.

When you choose to walk in the dark, your vision is limited. The Screaming Dead need to move into the sunlight.

DAVE MASSEY