

CLAYTOWN TROUPE

LONDON HARLESDEN

MEAN FIDDLER

CLAYTOWN TROUPE's vocalist Christian has an enormous mouth. It slits his face from ear to ear and when he grins nearby tables shake. There he goes skipping across stage, hollering cleanly like a devil who's washed his mouth out with turps, and here go two blokes behind me, warbling on about his similarity to Ian Astbury.

It's plain enough reasoning: Claytown Troupe play up to goth's sinewy guitar and vomiting bass formula, though they flex the possibilities — widening the sound with tentative keyboards and building up the presence of pulsing dance-rock rhythms. Like if you crossed Fields Of The Nephilim with INXS. Or if The Cult were garden gnomes on acid.

Shirking black attire for something a lighter shade of *brown*, the Bristol five-piece have kicked up merry hell among record companies who are still earnestly searching for the *next* post-Neph band to break. And with their pens poised for signatures tonight is party night — bumps for the birthday boys and frenetic dancing all round:

The Troupe are taking goth one step further on with songs such as 'Prayer' that'll make tassled jackets twitch while sounding good on CD. It sounds an ideal money-spinner

while sounding like a skeleton in a dishwasher. A new direction (toward Big Country!), less pompous, more down to earth and very brash. There's a sneaking feeling that they've a huge future.

Steve Lamacq