

Primitive Romance

STORY:BOZ

PHOTOS:K. SNYDER

It was a typical Saturday evening at the New Wave disco; however tonight Primitive Romance, a new band from Tampa was in town to check out the set-up at the club for their upcoming gig Monday night. Almost ANY out of town band is somewhat of an event for me, it helps break the monotony of living in this arm pit of the world called South Florida. Huddled around one of the broken patio tables was myself; Lester Esser, guitarist and vocalist; Allen Esser, drums; and Randy Barnwell, bass guitarist. Inside the crowd was dancing to the B 52's or was it Visage... who really cares? Lester didn't seem too impressed with the crowd or music, still he didn't appear too suprised; this is Ft. Lauderdale afterall, what else can you expect?

Unfortunately on Monday they played the same night that the Ramones were playing the Agora. The turnout was not exactly overwhelming, 75 people at

tops, nevertheless the fortunate few in attendance weren't disappointed. For myself it was perhaps the most enjoyable gig by any Florida band I'd seen play all year (the Hayheads included). They sounded quite confident on stage, not bad for a band that's been together for 2½ months. It would be easy to play up the influence of such bands as Joy Division, Wah! Heat, The Bunnymen, etc... but this would be inaccurate. What they do share with these bands however, is that "vital edge", a sense of tension that is always present even in lighter moments giving the music a sense of urgency. Their sound is more positive; not the gloomy despair of an Ian Curtis or an Ian McCulloch.



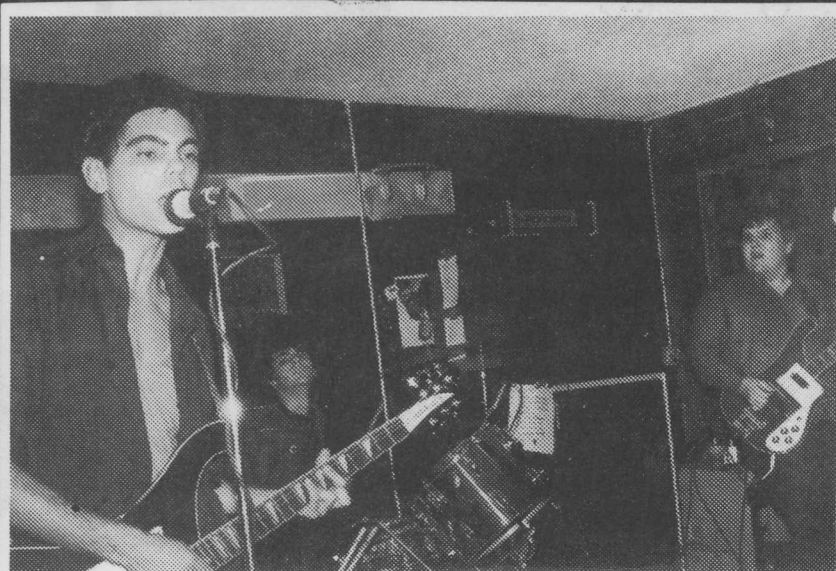
Their set was compelling, Lester's driving abrasive guitar played off Randy's throbbing bass and Allen's drumwork creating a collision of sound and noise, similar to the musical assault of bands like the Gang of Four and Mission of Burma. In an interview I just finished reading Stuart Adamson formerly of the Skids said that "there's only one way to classify music, it either gives you shivers up the back or it doesn't." If you'll excuse me to look silly, but stuff like this is similar to an opiate, nothing else matters except the music of the moment. OK. Enough soul bearing...back to reality... what about their songs you ask? Well let's see...there's "Time to Talk", a speedy tune featuring Lester's dissonant almost "psychedelic" sounding guitar work (I really hate to use that term but...), "Everything Means Nothing Anymore" is a lazy offbeat song, a change of pace, so to speak. My personal favorite was "Enter-Communion", a desperate urgent sounding plea.

Both Lester and Allen were previously in the Strait-Jackets who in their only Miami gig a year ago recieved a mixed reaction from the crowd; apparently some general comments refering to certain peoples lifestyles didn't agree with everyone in attendance. We briefly discussed the demise of the Jackets. Lester explained that the whole thing with the band "just turned into something that wasn't real." "We ran into a few financial problems, we recorded an album that was never released." Aparently this is still a sensitive subject for them to discuss, some bad feelings exist with one of the other former band members. Randy used to play in another band called Not Much. According to Randy this was basically a punk band that "poked a lot of fun at people" and that they "weren't serious about much of anything." Hence the band name.

They all see Primitive Romance as something totally different from their previous ventures. I couldn't agree more, although a few old Jackets' tunes remain, among them, "Jamaican Love". I questioned the inclusion of "Jamaican Love", an upbeat island song and Allen quickly defended it, "we like it", everything doesn't have to fit into a set sound. Aparently they don't wish to be stereotyped into any fixed catagories. Many new bands often fall into the early "burn-out syndrome" due to a lack of new material, often becoming stagnant. I doubt that this will be the case here as Lester pointed out that they "have a pretty much unlimited source of original material that we haven't learned; everyday something comes up." They are determined to progress musically, for example they expressed the possible limited use of a synthesizer in recording to add more to their already textured sound.

Unfortunetly Florida is not exactly the best enviroment for developing bands to suceed. In October the band plans on making the move to a more open city, Boston. Lester defends the move, "we want to play everyplace we can... there's no record companies, no backing, not many clubs here at all. Allen summarized things with the bitter truth that "the odds are against you here in Florida for sure." By the time you read this a 3 song flexi-disc should be out, designed primarily for promotion, a flexi being "cheaper to mail away." This will be followed by a standard 7" single, all on their own label, Dot City. Of course the ultimate goal would be an actual contract with a "real" label. They expressed their intrest in a larger independent label such as Rough Trade, where they would be free to pursue their own artistic direction.

Since Tampa seems to be the only other city in the state which can rival Miami with original bands I was kind of curious to see which scene they preferred. Unsuprisingly Lester strongly stated "besides a few exceptions I like bands in Tampa better. Bands down here seem to be so fake so backwards. The Cichlids were like big frauds." The Stick Figures, a former Tampa band who have relocated to D.C., who were famous for constantly changing their instruments throughout their sets



PRIMITIVE ROMANCE (CONTINUED)

remain personal favorites, "they're almost idols."

Next time you get the chance to see Primitive Romance, you owe it to yourself to do so. You can watch TV or listen to your Ramones records anytime. Everybody is so quick to complain about the scene down here, but when something interesting happens nobody shows up. Well I guess I'm asking for too much, I mean after all the Ramones are "superstars". Why would anyone want to go see a band doing new original music when they can go somewhere else and see their "idols" doing the same stuff that they've done for the past five years. Maybe I'm out of touch but, I always thought that the reason why people went to see bands in the first place was for the "music".

Top Sevens

SINGLES

1. JOY DIVISION- LOVE WILL TEAR US APART(DOM 7")
2. U2- FIRE(IMP 7")
3. SPECIALS- GHOST TOWN(7" & 12" IMP)
4. REACTIONS- LOVE YOU(DOM 7")
5. GANG OF FOUR- TO HELL WITH POVERTY(IMP 7")
6. SIOUXSIE & BANSHEES-SPELLBOUND (IMP 7")

7. HEAVEN 17- FASCIST GROOVE
THANG(IMP 45)

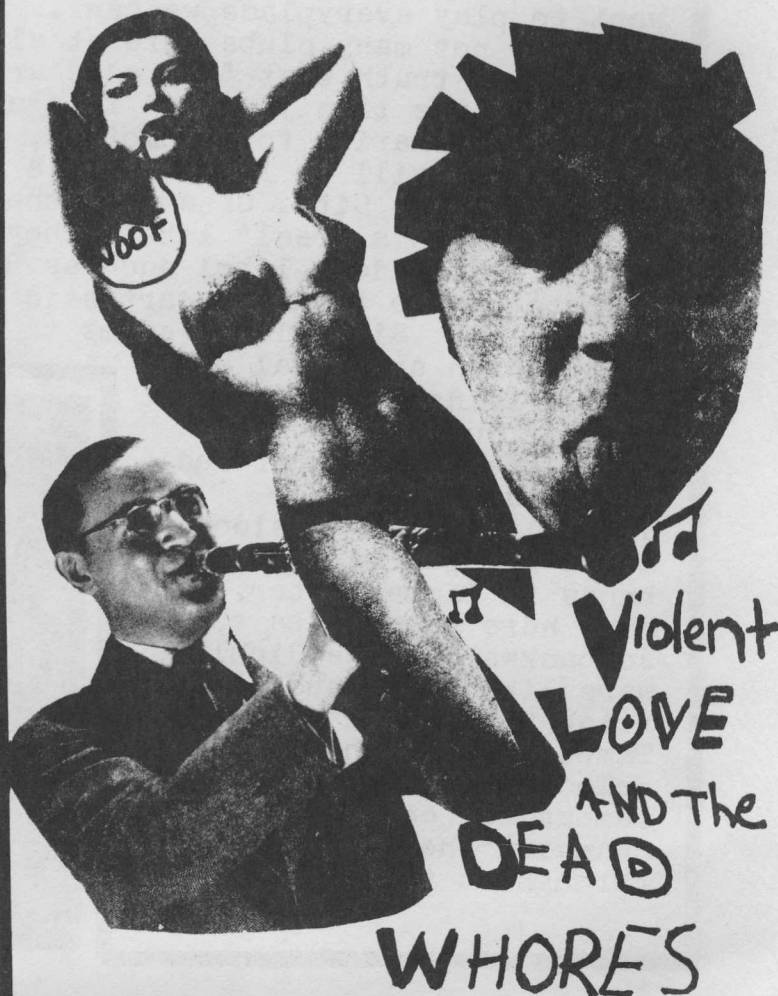
ALBUMS

1. JOY DIVISION- CLOSER(DOM)
2. THE BEAT- WHA'PPEN?(DOM)
3. X- WILD GIFT(DOM)
4. AU PAIRS- PLAYING WITH A DIFFERENT SEX(IMP)
5. GEN X- KISS ME DEADLY(IMP)
6. RAMONES- PLEASANT DREAMS(DOM)
7. PYLON- GYRATE(DOM)

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SEND IN YOUR VOTES FOR NEXT ISSUE!!!

Send them to "Wasted Guitar Heroes" c/o Suburban Relapse. Don't delay!

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