

The Hot Puppies



The Hot Puppies
under the crooked moon

THE FANTASTIC DEBUT ALBUM
OUT NOW

OMM's hot tips for 2006
OBSERVER MUSIC MONTHLY

"A feisty entertaining album bristling with energy"
ROCKSOUND

"...as fantastic as waking up
in a sea of Oreo cookies with no option
but to eat your way to safety"
NME

**** THE GUARDIAN
**** THE TIMES
**** MOJO

"extraordinary debut... an instant classic"
ARTROCKER

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Press



We live in a superabundant age of music, in which bands are gobbling up and spit out at breakneck speed, ensuring that what's new can't be easily perished up. The wondrous, disorienting zeal of genre rules up against a blur of 10-ft, one-man bands, while hoodish guitar legs emerge alongside cheap hungry Britpop revivals and quirky dance invasions.

Which gives some way to explain why OAM's hot tips for 2006 have little in common. Apart from the fact that they're all new, they're all in the kind of old-school boogie of George Harrison.

Aberystwyth's Hot Puppies, who have kicked their member from a Decoye pub, are an indie in a indie manner on the brown leather bouillabaisse. Fronted by the eager Becki Newman, the poppy quintet's recent single 'Terry' showcased their sharp pop – a combination of Blondie's punk kitsch and the Beatles' harmonies.

The five diverse musicianshipers, all of whom are self-proclaimed 'soft rock' aficionados, are the Feeling. Don't let the choice, evidence it, they're going to Dan Gillespie. Their debut release, 'The Little World', proved that the band's wide-screen tunes are undeniably affecting.

With the delectable of a man on top of his game, they're known to his name as Derek Sudo. He's already the very early winner of a Melon Award. He's a self-made man who bypassed the music business by shifting more than 10,000 mp3s off his own back. With his first album proper, 'This Is My Demo', the Harrogate rapper's playful rhymes are paired to lush, lush, lush music.

Huddled nearby by the window, with a distant view of the sea, is 12-year-old Nathan Fale. He may have the looks of a youthful Prince, but his first album, 'The Prince', is a masterpiece of a solo album. Drawing on the style of Prince, Fale's music is a deliciously atmospheric strain of postmodern electronic.

Realizing that the music of the future is a matter of a few years, Kila is the unlikely subject of a solo album. Kila, which means 'knowledge' in Welsh, is a musical virtuoso who is not in the band, though it is surely only a matter of time.

Whether our pop picks ever top the charts is a moot point, of course. Whether they deserve to is anything but.



1 The Hot Puppies (left to right): Becki Gibson, Ben Hancock, Derek Newman, Robert Wood, Luke Taylor 2 The Feeling (left to right): Kevin Jeremiah, Cogan Jeremiah, Paul Stewart, Richard Jones, Dan Gillespie 3 Sway 4 Nathan Fale 5 Kila Kila

Observer Music Magazine

Puppies: get 'em while they're hot

Mat Snow

Among the tasks that burden the music journalist's day, that of tipster is taken least seriously by those at the coalface. Journalists who "discover" such enduring legends as the Beatles or Nirvana can literally dine out on the claim for decades afterwards, so we habitually ramp up the value of an act on whose ground floor we hope to get in on. It's a vice we admit to ourselves but seldom to readers, who point it out anyway.

Most of our predictions are ludicrously wrong, yet we persist. So, on the 20th anniversary of the last time I was halfway right in tipping a Next Big Thing (Wet Wet Wet), here's another: the Hot Puppies.

Originally from Aberystwyth but now based in Cardiff, the Hot Puppies sound like Blondie, aspire to be Pulp, have the group dynamic of Fleetwood Mac, and confess that their biggest influence is the guitarist's mum. "My favourite lyricist is Leonard Cohen, and that comes from being brought up with his music in the house. Same with Nick Cave," explains Luke Taylor, who also writes the group's wittily melodramatic words. "On Saturday morning, when I'd had a late night at the youth club, my mum would always play Lay Me Low by Nick Cave to wake us all up. When you're 13 that's a pain in the arse, but gradually you really start to like them. Cave, Cohen and Lorca are the biggest influences on the tunes we write. It all comes down to my mum."

Mum is to be commended on inspiring music of a theatricality rare in today's dress-down scene, abounding in arresting storylines and imagery, and shaped around bittersweet ukulele-rock melodies where early Blondie meet the shade of Kurt Weill. Their debut album, *Under the Crooked Moon*, so plucked my interest that I'm reliving my professional



1980s by sitting in a pub and getting rather excited about the artistry of a bunch of 25-year-olds convinced they're on to something. Taylor is going out with keyboard, theremin, strings and marimba player Beth Gibson; drummer Rupert "Bert" Wood and Piaf-like singer Bec Newman are also an item; bassist Ben Hancock's girlfriend is a recorder virtuoso who is not in the band, though it is surely only a matter of time.

The band members' day jobs involve care for the disabled, gardening, and selling fruit and veg and, over a pint or two, they seem as grounded and easy-going as the characters that Taylor writes and Gibson sings about are tortured and intense. The single *The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful*, for instance, is that rare artifact, an epistolary song to Observer agony aunt Mariella Frostrup, confessing that no consumed is the letter writer by jealousy of her boyfriend's dead ex that she has taken on her identity.

Unlike Hard-Fi or the Streets, the Hot Puppies seek not to reflect the reality of their world but transcend it. "I don't really like modern popular culture," says Taylor, despite not having a fogeyish bone in his undandified body. "Our song Theda Bara is not about Theda

Bara. It's a fantasy standing for a different time, a more glamorous world. Your lyrics can moan about Tony Blair and the state of TV, or you can ignore it and write about your ideal. That comes from having a few rubbish jobs and imagining something else out there, creating it and living it through your music."

The return of fantasy to rock – a long overdue swing back of the pendulum, and the Hot Puppies are in the vanguard.

The Hot Puppies debut album, *Under the Crooked Moon*, is released on July 24 on Fierce Panda.

Singalonga Nessun Dorma

Renato Balsadonna

On July 7, Turandot will be relayed live from the Royal Opera House to 12 outdoor screens across the country. Beforehand, Royal Opera chorus master Renato Balsadonna will give the crowds in the Covent Garden Piazza a lesson in how

THE HOT PUPPIES



The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful
(Fierce Panda)

It is, on the one hand, a great name for a band, as any name derived from a euphemism for a lady's breasts is (in an admittedly purile but still funny way). But if the Pups keep cranking out singles as beguiling and flushed with ideas as this, they'll wish they'd given themselves a moniker that is more 'stand the test of time' than 'comedy bow tie'. Two out of three tracks herein are spiffo, mainly the off-kilter PJ Harvey-esque title track, with its lovely swirls of Hammond and lyrics addressed directly to Mariella Frostrup, and the even better 'Just Like A Roman Candle, Joe', all nibbly Farfisa runs and dumbcluck 'WHOOH!' noises. Now sort that name out. **PC**

Follow-up to the magnificent 'Terry'

CD OUT MONDAY

NME

The Hot Puppies
Green Eyeliner (Fierce Panda NING185)
Welsh new wave five-piece The Hot Puppies release this track as precursor to debut album *Under The Crooked Moon*, due on August 7. Handclaps and a Sixties-sounding keyboard give the tune a poppy edge, while Becki Newman's vibrato gives the band a sound like a moodier younger sister of Blondie.

Music Week

THE HOT PUPPIES



Green Eyeliner
(Fierce Panda)

Before hearing this track *NME* wasn't too fussed with green eyeliner. Obviously it looks cool on Lily Allen, but so would psoriasis and fishnet socks. But The Hot Puppies like it and being the weak-minded bandwagon jumpers that we are, now we do too. Over tripping Britpop sounds singer Becki confesses her make-up fetishism with enunciation so clear you could stand it up and call it a window. This is the kind of elegant pop that Kate Long Blondes will shuffle gracefully to at her wedding, until *NME* stumbles on to the dancefloor spilling lager down her dress. Also, the B-side sounds like groove-meisters Michael Viner's Incredible Bongo Band, only minus the bongos. **AM**

Puppies? Eyeliner? Someone call PETA

CD OUT MONDAY

NME

HOT PUPPIES - Green Eyeliner
TALES of seduction from Wales' finest observational indie-poppers who have been described as the new Pulp. 4

The Sun

Hot Puppies
Green Eyeliner
(Fierce Panda)

The claws are out. Somewhere between admiration and envy churns my feelings for the Hot Puppies. Doing more for Wales than those twits on Big Brother, this chic rock outfit are instantly likeable. I say "rock" outfit but it's not as simple as that. 'Green Eyeliner' lies somewhere between the feisty angular pop-punk delivery of the Puppies' 'Love or Trial?' and the smouldering croon of other tracks, like 'Under the Crooked Moon'.

While throwing out influences from Blondie and Saint Etienne, they cradle sounds of classic fifties rock n roll mixed with synthy keyboards, and passionately capture the sleaze of sexual come-ons by married men caged in a small town, to catchy and sophisticated effect. This is dancefloor for the post-teenage youth and it's just one of so many brilliantly crafted songs by this gorgeous group. You can see why I'm stuck between envy and admiration. But, for now, my only resort is to don some green-eyeliner of my own, hold hairbrush in hand, and sing my heart out.

Angela Balakrishnan



THE HOT PUPPIES PHOTO: RACHEL BEVIS

Artrock

The Hot Puppies

Under The Crooked Moon (Fierce Panda NONG42CD)

Much has been written about Cardiff's The Hot Puppies of late and much of that praise is justified by this debut album, which fuses Blondie-esque new wave pop hooks with an open approach to instrumentation that sees theremins, marimbas and cellos thrown into the equation. And in Becki Newman they have a fantastically charismatic singer.

Music Week



Debut effort from sugar-sweet popsters

■ This is classy pop done by indie kids – think Blondie on a budget.

■ Like a nymphomaniac Wicked Witch of the West, singer Becki's voice is as sexy as it is scary.

■ There are more tunes here than in a throat lozenge factory. 'Terry' and 'The Bottled Ship Song' are our favoured cuts.



Loaded

The Hot Puppies

★★★★

Under The Crooked Moon

FIERCE PANDA

It's la nouvelle Blondie.

Just as 30 years ago Blondie took The Shangri-Las as their launchpad rather than destination, so The Hot Puppies – formed in Aberystwyth in 2000 but only releasing their debut album now – have their

roots in Blondie's first two albums but already are branching out luxuriantly. Singer Becki Newman evokes Edith Piaf's overwrought quaver, perfectly suited to tuneful and crisply performed songs that not only embrace the seeming paradox of cabaret cleverness and heartfelt yearning but leave lipstick on its collar. The latest single, 'The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful', and its predecessor 'Terry' fill a Pulp-shaped hole, while the brightest highlight, 'Theda Bara', rhymes the silent movie vamp of the title with "lunch hour", and that's just for starters.

Mat Snow

Mojo

The Hot Puppies

Under the Crooked Moon (Fierce Panda)

★★★★☆

Coming straight out of Aberystwyth, there is a strangely alluring streak of grubby romance shot through the heart of the Hot Puppies' debut. "Terry won't tell me if that's blood or Campari on his hand," groans the lead singer Bec Newman to twangy new-wave backing on 'Terry', before pondering the ins, outs and her (potential) part in small-town infidelity on 'Green Eyeliner' — Pulp fans' ears should be pricking up.

It's wry stuff, but for each moment of svelte pop sass that creeps up and whispers Blondie, there is the occasional flirtation with lumpy indie ordinariness, recalling any number of Britpop also-rans from the past decade. Still, one play of Under the Crooked Moon will raise the glamour quota in any indie disco, Aberystwyth or elsewhere.

BEN MACHELL

The Times

THE HOT PUPPIES – 'Under the Crooked Moon' (FIERCE PANDA)

Regular readers of this page will know that we're big fans of The Hot Puppies here, so we're pretty excited to have landed a copy of their debut long-player 'Under the Crooked Moon'. Kicking off with recent single 'Terry', the album continues in similarly excellent fashion with 'The Drowsing Nymph' and 'The Bottled Ship Song' standing out as future indie anthems.

The Fly

THE HOT PUPPIES [7] 'UNDER THE CROOKED MOON'



(FIERCE PANDA)

This sultry, roughly-hewn debut from the Welsh five-piece is clinical grrrr-pop. Charming vignettes take shape as singer Becki Newman lets

Morrissey take control of her tongue: tales of putting on green eyeliner, dancing the night away with a bloke called Terry and having your heart broken. Becki's seductive vocal power naturally brings to mind Blondie, and The Hot Puppies share trendy, polka-dot-dress territory with The Pipettes, but there are also tasty slabs of mystery and punk grit here. 'Terry', for one, sounds like he's been playing Patrick Bateman for the night: "Terry won't tell me if that's blood or Campari on his hands." A feisty, entertaining album, bristling with energy.

www.thehotpuppies.com

MIKE HAYDOCK

Rocksound



DIY classic pop? Could such a thing exist? **Richard Davis** looks closely at the Hot Puppies' extraordinary debut...

The Hot Puppies
Under the Crooked Moon
(Fierce Panda)

The Hot Puppies' debut is problematic. Refusing to fit in anywhere – neither arsekick proper (in its current Bloc Party/Future Heads-focused incarnation), nor indie-schm indie (in its current NME-fetted incarnation) – the Puppies wilfully seek to tread a singular path. And this album, in keeping with this singular path-treading, is a declaration of independence that is – quite literally – neither here nor there.

So, where is it? Without current reference points, we have to look elsewhere. We must look, for instance, to the past. We can also look to areas outside (does it suggest it?) the music industry. Those external forays are actually more straightforward than they may at first appear. *Under the Crooked Moon* contains references to a wide-ranging, disparate array of entities: to Salome; to past bands; to cinema moments long past (a song

about silent-screen vamp Theda Bara) and to comic book king Gilbert Hernandez.

Beginning with 'Terry', the album sets its agenda early. A tale of love, perhaps unrequited, teenage angst and a youthful obsession with appearance, this song is a good summation of the album's initial concerns. Two tracks later and 'Green Eyeliner' develops these concerns further: appearance has now become a useful metaphor for that most intense of emotions – jealousy. Described by the band themselves as probably 'the most tragic song on the album', it nevertheless is paradoxically poppy, upbeat. It's possibly the most engagingly infectious song you're likely to hear for a long time.

Moving from *Under the Crooked Moon* is the song which bears the same name – continuing a rock tradition which stretches back to the Doors' *Waiting for the Sun*. It apparently does not fit in well enough with the rest of the album. Yet it may return, albeit in telecentric form. This would be wise, seeing

as this particular song is one of The Puppies' best. Not that this album is bristling with great songs – quite the opposite, in fact. It is what one would have been called an instant classic, comprised of scintillating electric wonders.

The album was recorded under a boxing ring, and it is possible, during certain moments, to hear the sound of bodies hitting the deck, as they suffer the consequences of powerful slaps to the knees, neatly and corporately, representing the knockout, tragic blow suffered by many of the protagonists of The Hot Puppies album. And the Pups themselves potentially have a tragedy of their own approaching, as faddish music buyers find themselves not knowing what to do with them. It is always possible, however, for the discerning listener to reach out beyond the misses to grasp that rare gem, clutch it to the chest, and save it back home to the protective fan. And to the CD player.

Richard Davis

THE HOT PUPPIES

Under the Crooked Moon

FIERCE PANDA



Pigeonhole-evading Welsh indie combo

Much as the South Welsh don't need any more stereotyping, their local rock history boasts an undeniable lineage of gutsy female vocalists – Shirley Bassey, Bonnie Tyler, The Darling Buds, Catatonia et al. The Hot Puppies – from Cardiff via Aberystwyth – bear clear resemblance to the last, with vocalist Becki Newman maintaining the proud tradition of apparently gargling with pebbles before enunciating. There's much to admire in her quintet's indie-pop, though, with dynamic twists and turns underpinning cute, cruel lyrics on "Theda Bara" and plaintive single "How Come You Don't Hold Me No More?".

CHRIS ROBERTS

Artrocker

Uncut



The Hot Puppies
Under the Crooked Moon



(Fierce Panda) £10.99

The emergence of the Pipettes, the Puppini Sisters and Cardiff's Hot Puppies gives this summer's indie-pop a female-fronted, theatrical slant. But who will come out on top in the autumn? It's got to be the Puppies, whose singer, Bec Newman, fills every tremulous syllable with Ronnie Spector-ish vulnerability. In a perfect world, she would have written the tunes herself, but the man who did, guitarist Luke Taylor, is obviously in touch with his feminine side: Green Eyeliner and The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful sound convincingly like the product of a vengeful woman's pen. The dramatic song structures reference early Pulp and the girl-group era, with one acoustic ballad, Heartbreak Soup, slipped in as a respite from the high emotion. The Puppies are limited only by the boundaries of their imagination; shame the album has come too late for this year's Mercury prize.

Caroline Sullivan



The Hot Puppies reviewed on page 12
Of all this summer's girl-fronted indie-pop bands, the Puppies will come out on top



HOT PUPPIES
UNDER THE CROOKED MOON

FIERCE PANDA RECORDS

This eagerly anticipated release from the Welsh indie rockers is a refreshing and well put together album of 13 tracks – including the critically acclaimed singles 'Terry', 'The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful' and the next single 'How Come You Don't Hold Me No More'. 'Green Eyeliner' and 'Baptist Boy' are upbeat rocking tunes packed with thrashing guitars and powerful vocals in all the right places, and in contrast Becki Newman's lead vocals are truly showcased on the beautiful 'Heartbreak Soup'. A mini version of the Ella Fitzgerald song 'Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall' closes the album with the girls' harmonies leaving you wanting more. NOW

★★★★★

The Guardian

Notion

The Hot Puppies: Under The Crooked Moon

Type: Album

Release date: 24/07/2006

Label: Fierce Panda

Link: [Fierce Panda - the fierce panda website](#)

Info: Debut album from Welsh quintet



Our reviews

thomas blatchford

A couple of years ago, there was a pile of singles and demos, most of them still packaged and waiting for opening and perusal, awkwardly balanced next to my stereo to be reviewed. There was one release nestled amongst the rest that not only pissed from a towering height over all the forced poseurs, damp acoustic-wielding chancers and turgid schoolboy rockers that week, but has also since become the standard by which I judge almost all other strains of pop music. It was glamorous, oozed the shiniest melancholy and told a story of temptation with a sly wink that made it about as innocent as OJ Simpson. It also had a great name - 'Green Eyeliner'. Now, two years later, the debut album from **The Hot Puppies** has finally landed in my lap, too. That the aforementioned single is *not* the beacon-like centre point, instead a potential hit among potential hits, proves just how dazzling this album is.

The thing about the Puppies' output so far (including their other short-playing effort 'Terry', the (a)rousing opener here) is that it has given them the air of bedsit indie-pop and chip-shop chic - you wouldn't have been surprised if they were the sort of band who'd pull your hair, kick you to the gutter, snog your boyfriend and make such a gorgeous sound in the process that you'd still be grovellingly thankful. But *Under the Crooked Moon* proves them to be something much deeper - lovelorn, dramatic, tender even. "I feel just like a ship in a bottle", quivers Bec Newman with her irresistible bruised-inside croon, resonating somewhere between PJ Harvey and Gwen Stefani, while violins gracefully collide with military drums behind her. "I don't know how to get out or how I got in." The tone is set for the whole experience: these songs resound so bittersweetly that there is the inescapable sense of being exquisitely entrapped; the twang-happy guitars, bristling harmonies and wildly oscillating organ sound act like sirens, drawing the listener on to the rocks.

What stories this lot can tell, too. The occasional 6/8 time signatures mean that there's a sense of the swaying sea-shanty about certain songs, but it can't take away from how the Pups can match gutsy musical majesty with yarn-spinning lyrical excellence. Take 'Bonnie + Me', for instance, a tale of lost friendship that starts as a fairly quaint but tragic Arcade-Fire-on-the-cheap reminiscence and then builds and erupts into one of their most effectively stirring downbeat anthems. Or 'The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful', the Pulp-a-like musical letter from the girlfriend of a male widow that brings an element of crashing indie-disco to proceedings. Even during their sparser moments, like the plucky but elegantly forlorn 'Heartbreak Soup' and the dainty closing track 'Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall', there's such power in the words and the way in which Bec sings them that you hardly notice the minimal accompaniment at all.

As an album, this shatters pop's glass ceiling as well as pop-lovers' hearts; it banishes all the connotations (disposability, artificiality, insincerity etc) that stop pop music from being the most rousing of art forms. This proves that they can go from a sly wink to a world-weary sigh and still sound as seductive as ever. Rather magnificent.

Drowned In Sound

**The F&M
playlist**

Our music team pick the songs or albums, old or new, they just can't turn off

The Hot Puppies *Under the Crooked Moon*
Debut album from deadpan Welsh five-piece who specialise in astutely observed, character-led art-rock in a Pulp vein. At their heart, happily, beats a restless, profound beauty. **Ian Gittins**

The Guardian

The Hot Puppies

★★★★ Bull & Gate, London

Ian Gittins

Thursday August 3, 2006

The Guardian



A riot of sartorial styles and influences ... The Hot Puppies.

The decade since Britpop's demise has witnessed a decline in the school of very British, observational pop, as crafted by the likes of Pulp and Blur. Welsh art-rockers the Hot Puppies appear ready - and able - to reverse this trend.

A riot of sartorial styles and influences, the Puppies write propulsive pop songs shot through with elegantly off-kilter lyrics. Their visual focal point is singer Bec Newman who, clad in a pinafore and sensible pearls, suggests Siouxsie Sioux trapped inside the body of an Aberystwyth librarian.

Their debut album *Under the Crooked Moon* is packed with absurdist, articulate kitchen-sink vignettes of everyday life. Even in tonight's sweatbox, Newman is adept at affecting a little-girl-lost disingenuousness that lends a vulnerability to their cleverly camp, enjoyably overwrought repertoire.

Keyboards and theremin give their attitudinal indie rock an eccentrically sinister air, like Yeah Yeah Yeahs given a hearty rogering by Sparks. Terry is a stand-out track, Newman adopting the aloofness of PJ Harvey to croon quirkily disturbing words of a predatory suitor with no good on his mind and "blood and Campari" on his hands.

New track *After the Beheading* has the bleak humour of This Is Hardcore-era Pulp, while Newman drawls the seductive *Green Eyeliner* with a coquettish élan worthy of Debbie Harry.

They close with single *The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful*, a song about risqué obsession couched in the form of a letter to Observer agony aunt Mariella Frostrup. The Hot Puppies may be unprecedented but, right now, they sound like nobody else.

The Guardian July '06

Thursday 27/07/06 The Hot Puppies @ Bull & Gate, London

[Email to a friend](#) [Print Page](#)

by Layla West

Ah the Bull & Gate; a live venue in North London with real character. Bands probably played to a bawdy crowd back in the days when Kentish Town was still classed as scummy. Whereas nowadays it may be a little rough around the edges but there's no mistaking the arsehole of Camden has benefited from its property prices.

It's a shame the new found affluence hasn't benefited the pub enough to get air con fitted. But then again, this is London and perhaps it is the home of someone that once invented something and so cannot get as much of a lick of paint until the National Trust are consulted. Whatever the reason, this lowly reviewer would have given their right eye for air con in a hot sweltering room (and our right eye is our favourite as well). Oh yes, in this sweltering stifling heat in the back of The Bull & Gate, **The Hot Puppies** definitely work for their supper.

Still humble enough to set up their own kit at their own album launch party for *'Under The Crooked Moon'*.

The Hot Puppies face a packed room full of those wise enough to brave the heat for a band whose star is on the ascent. Waltzing on with a throbbing, wailing intro and a barefoot vixen waiting in the wings before slinking onstage, the live version of last year's quirky release *'Terry'* rocks in all the right places giving the very British lyrics a new lease of life. "Bloody hell innit hot!" are front-woman Becky's opening words. And boy is she right. With a jumpy little beat underscoring Becky's raspy vocals perfectly *'Drowsing Nymph'* kept things momentous. It takes the third in this evening's repertoire, *'Theda Bara'*, with its soaring intensity to indicate this five piece could easily play arenas, and with a voice as sumptuous as Becky's, it would sound divine. *'Green Eyeliner'* garners the loudest cheer of the night though, maybe due to the clap along chorus or just its upbeat prettiness.

There's something of the kitsch fifties melodrama in The Hot Puppies - the most apparent in *'How Come You Don't Hold Me No More'*. It sounds like the pages of a diary a million pubescent girls wish they could write, destined to be sung along to whilst they clutch their cushions for comfort, realising that someone understands what it's like to be them. By this point drummer Bert looks like his lung capacity is shot. He sure puts everything into his set, the whole band do too, and matched with the banter with the crowd, they had everyone in the palm of their hand. The rapturous audience have to wait until the encore for the sumptuously perfect pop gem *'The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful'* to be unleashed. But it is worth the wait.

The Hot Puppies have bittersweet, observationally poignant lyrics, combined with vocals that astound. By far the most promising aspect though is their potential to completely blow everyone away; the band are loving causing as much noise as possible and this lust for life is the reason The Hot Puppies deserve to soar.

Gigwise July '06

The Hot Puppies @ Water Rats, 5/12/06

The Long Blondes may revel in their arty obtuseness, the Gossip wrap their incendiary disco-punk in righteous polemic, but the Hot Puppies alone in 2006 brought a touch of pop panache to the femme rock party, their debut album 'Under the Crooked Moon' a dizzying head-rush of nicotine-stained glamour and lipstick-smudged romance. Returning to the scene of past triumphs, a sold-out Water Rats welcome on-stage a band who've visibly grown in confidence since their last gig here. Opener 'Terry' is thrillingly decadent, an intoxicating four-minutes of lustful reverie inspired by a dashing suitor ("Terry looks so handsome sitting in my father's chair / airing his despair"). Exhibiting a swooning cinematic grandeur, a streak of rockabilly and an undercurrent of classic gothic melodrama, this is rock with a heart as well as a libido. They look the part too - the girls desolate damsel waifs, the boys fallen matinee idols, louché and dishevelled. Singer Becky Newman - the Gwen Stefani of the Vaileys, if we're being trite - is on mesmerising form, alternating between lascivious purr and belting crescendo in her delivery. Whether coyly suggesting illicit lunch hour trysts on the ska-tinged 'Theda Bara' or plotting escapist fantasies on 'Bonnie and Me', her ravenously lustre never lets up. In the glam stomp of 'Green Eyeliner' she's the girl who'll drag you off the dance floor and snog your face off in a darkened corner before callously abandoning you ("I hear that love and God / couldn't save you from a girl with green eyeliner on"). Only on new single 'How Come You Don't Hold Me No More?' a disarming paean to lost intimacy which manages to transcend cliché, does the veil of cocksure confidence slip to reveal a glimpse of vulnerability. This may be a sign of things to come: a clutch of newbies hint at a subtler, more introspective direction for the second album, whilst retaining the lyrical ingenuity and wide-eyed pop nous which saw them outwit and out-sass most of their contemporaries. They encore without playing arguably their best-known song ('The Girl Who Was Too Beautiful'), but its a mark of how far this band have come that it's not even missed. Big hearts, even bigger melodies, why they're not stars yet is beyond me.

11 Dec 2006 by Darren Lee

Disorder

THE HOT PUPPIES

The Water Rats Theatre (MONTI), London

5th December

The Hot Puppies demand attention. In perhaps the best possible setting for their theatrical leanings, The Water Rats Theatre with its red curtain-ed backdrop, they seem to be in their element.

Bec Newman is barefooted, having taken off her red stilettos, guitarist Luke Taylor has a Mozzier quiff going on, Beth Gibson, keyboards, backing vocals and... erm... therein, looks glamorous in black, while the boys at the back look like they're having fun.

Miss Newman may be soft-spoken, but within seconds of opener, Terry, she's already made an impact on the gathered audience. Her dramatic voice, devoid of overbearing histrionics, swims through melodies at Olympic standard. Drowsing Nymph and it's salty sea shanty tinge, is dominated by her brow-sweeping gestures and restrained vocal.

The band, meanwhile, are tighter than The Horrors' keks. It seems the last six months has done them the world of good - and they were great before.

Of the two new songs aired in this intimate venue, it can be said The Hot Puppies have an exciting year ahead of them. Weightier, darker numbers characterised by that effortlessness, which they seem to have adopted as their very own.

It's the songs we know that really get the crowd swaying. Green Eyeliner's tale of jealousy remains their captivating best. Miss Newman tip-toes to the edge of the stage and reaches out as if trying to touch the back of the room, or to absorb the electric vibes being given off by the crowd, who are clearly taken aback.

The whoops of delight that greets Baptist Boy confirm a firm love for the band's genre-pogoing, this being a rock n roll jangle worthy of Luke's 50s hairstyle, and, probably, for Bec's delicate shimmying. Encoring with The Party, it's pretty clear that the likes of The Long Blondes have something to worry about and it ain't their make-up.

So how long before The Hot Puppies are sick of a supporting role and take centre stage? We've got divas on our hands. **Brad Barrett**



Picture credit: Brad Barrett