



MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA

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THE ELECTRIFICATION OF SALFORD (EOS001)

Feat. Ghost Outfit / Monster Island / Womb

The King's Arms, Salford, 2 July 2011

Electrification

Noun /ɪˌlek.trɪ.fɪˈkeɪ.ʃən/ [U]

1 the charging of a medium or place with electricity (as adjective electrified): *Martin had grown up without electricity and electrification of his neighbourhood only occurred in the mid-1990s.*

2 (often as adjective electrifying) cause a sudden sense of thrilling excitement in (someone): *an electrifying performance*

MOTHERS OF ENGLAND, this happened ...

SWAYS records, fresh from being described as 'this city's most influential new independent label' by the enduringly, endearingly fact-averse Manchester Evening News - the label website describes its location as 'Salford, England' but such gnomic, ambiguous statements which tantalisingly hint at some kind of meaning, an elusive truth that is but glimpsed before it slips away, will never stem Manchester's long and proud tradition of *not recognising the territorial sovereignty of the other city* and plundering everything pure and good that it has to offer, dissolving civic boundaries to

suit its purposes when in fact, as some bloke once said, when it comes to these Siamese cities there is a 'very important difference' ... fresh from that accolade, which is, it must be said, otherwise factually true, at least as far as the label's musical influence is concerned, and anyway, some members of SWAYS allegedly live in Manchester, so may they long be the most influential new independent label of *both* cities, why quibble, pedant? ... fresh from that glory, SWAYS launched their new live music project, THE ELECTRIFICATION OF SALFORD, on 2 July 2011 AD in the stunning domed attic room of the King's Arms, Salford.

In a clear statement of artistic intent, the night was kicked off by WOMB, the all female improv band who seem set to take the local music scene by storm with their multi-instrumental experimentalism. Having previously performed in wide and eclectic venues, from pub back rooms to the KRAAK dens of the Northern Quarter, where they recently performed a soundtrack to a David Lynch-themed mud wrestling contest - think ERASERHEAD remade for ITV by Andrea Dworkin, yes? - the stripped down line up (4 not 15) and raised stage almost teetered on the edge of conventionality. But such fears were immediately abolished by the psychedelic video projections playing as a backdrop, the appearance of chains, instrumental rotation, the eschewal of melody and an approach to song structure that was organic but only in a post-nuclear fallout kind of way. WOMB will always divide audiences and the responses seemed visibly mixed - from perplexed indie girls there to goggle GHOST OUTIFT to engaged pseudo-intellectuals earnestly brandishing their half pints of bitter. One person was dancing. This all added up to a very good thing.

MONSTER ISLAND are routinely compared to THE FALL (no bad thing, surely?) by lazy reviewers because their singer sounds a little bit like Mark E. Smith. But this is a far more muscular and furious beast - their sound is tight and taught and fast. This is THE FALL sent to boot camp and told not to come back until their musical shoelaces were well and truly tightened. The singer/guitarist had some problems with the microphone - that was funny. The drummer was

a maniac. The bass player looked innocent. He definitely didn't do it, no way.

Then for their first ever headline show: GHOST OUTFIT. Everyone loves GHOST OUTFIT and rightly so. Especially when the singer Jack insists on dressing like a child in an over-size slogan-emblazoned t-shirt - remember when you wanted an adult's shirt that wasn't available in child's sizes but it had a good design so you bought it anyway and you didn't care or realise that it looked like a dress? A triumph of substance over style that is to be commended. And the Grange Hill chic has a nice twist: the school bully on drums. There is a look of brute animal destructiveness to Mike, the lizard-faced thumper.

As everyone who ever reviews them says, there are only two of them but they make lots of noise. And tonight they are loud. Really loud. But underneath the layered howl there is a sing-along pop sensibility delivering, quite simply, great tunes.

Previous SWAYS live events such as the label launch night have placed great emphasis on the visuals and the creation of a sense of occasion; tonight, they surpassed themselves. Previously, other bands on the label such as The Louche F.C. and Emperor Zero have gone for a backdrop of painfully credible art house noir films (THE TRIAL, WINGS OF DESIRE) but tonight GHOST OUTFIT went for BAMBI ... You didn't sense that this was done with a sense of irony or playfulness. More just because it's, you know, a good film. Perhaps there was a knowing reference to THE SEX PISTOLS and their deranged biopic THE GREAT ROCK 'N' ROLL SWINDLE, which repeatedly asks: who killed Bambi? You have a sense that GHOST OUTFIT are out to counteract such intimations of brutality. There is a gentleness at the heart of this band. Here Bambi lives on. At least as far as Jack is concerned. Don't tell the drummer though. For he would rip Bambi's fucking head off.

A final word must go to SWAYS for one final triumph: these people know how to host an after-party. After last orders, not only did

they persuade the vast majority of the audience to trample through inner city wastelands and darkened backstreets to SWAYS HQ in the shadows of Strangeways, they also translated their warehouse practice rooms into a landscape of debauchery. One room devoted to 90s disco and one to a WOMB-led improvised free for all. I swear one guy played a single drum for about four hours. But I can't be sure. It was like the 60s: if you can remember it, then you weren't there. Boys smoked cigarettes and played rumbling basslines. Girls lay on the floor howling into microphones and vivisectioning guitars. This was not Factory Manchester-style but Factory New York-style. Only in Salford, England.

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