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Freek Show

Freek Show dons Bermuda shorts and strolls Citywalk like a tourist

BY JIM FREEK

Bloody tourists! What was once just the title of a latter-day (and better left ignored) 10cc album has become a cry of frustration from the people of Los Angeles. The doomed Knitting Factory may never live to join the party -- which is fine, because that leaves less competition for the leading offender: Universal City's Citywalk. Every year, millions of people from overseas and out of state are attracted to this temple of tackiness by its grandiose, oversized storefronts and neon-lit version of what Hollywood really is. When they leave the city broke, they curse L.A., and we return the favor by cursing them for generating a need for such tourist creations. And such a creation has again appeared with the recent expansion of Citywalk. Boasting "L.A.'s only dueling piano rock 'n' roll show," Howl at the Moon has just pumped up the volume of Citywalk's decadent nightlife charm and has simply got to be the most non-L.A. place to pop up in L.A. since the Saddle Ranch Chop House on Sunset Boulevard shot barflies off a mechanical bull. Believing that this was our best entertainment value for a Tuesday night, *Freek Show* (now regrettably) missed a rare appearance by legendary soul man Billy Preston at the Scientology Celebrity Centre (yes, you read that right) to delve further into what sounded like a soon-to-be-short-lived phenomenon. Upon our arrival, perched high atop Citywalk's blinding, Vegas-like lighting, we spotted two pianos facing each other, upon which a pair of musical madcaps cranked out everything from the surreal-and-slightly-genius ("Crazy Train," "In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida," "My Ding-a-Ling") to the obvious ("Let's Get Drunk And Screw," "Piano Man," a Pussy Galore medley...ha! Just kidding!). At various intervals, Howl at the Moon's staff -- a wild and crazy bunch who look like they all got fired from Ed Debevic's for "partying" too much and being "too rock 'n' roll" -- climbed on top of the pianos and the bar, jumping up and down, singing along, and shaking their asses when appropriate. Despite a pretty decent crowd for a school night, things must not have been too hot, since the bar's management was soon inviting *Freek Show* to party with them at Tu Tu Tango...Sad to say, it actually took the Westside to save us, as we made our escape to Liquid Kitty where DJ Charlie Collins was keeping the cocktail sippin' crowd entranced. Not only is the tiny club home to Combo Au Go-Go's Sunday night spy-jazz soirees, but it also serves as home to such drinks as the Kitty Colada, Bitches Brew, and -- one we're still not quite sure about -- the Golden Shower. Thus, Liquid Kitty stands as one of the few remaining Westside joints that merits inclusion in any catalog of cool. Still, it's located across the street from that dreaded frat house with a stage, the Gig, which is one of those clubs that seems to only book bands that have the "We're gonna make it in L.A." mentality. And has anybody actually gone to the Gig's Thursday night "gothic renaissance dance club" called Antiquity? Do people who hang out in West L.A. even appreciate goth...or have they, too, all been brainwashed into thinking that the Cult were a metal band?

Strangely enough, we noticed a severe lack of tourists on Thursday when we paid a visit to that midcity oasis known as (Jewel's) Catch One for their weekly lesbian night, Puss 'n Boots. (Hey, any club bearing the title of a New York Dolls song seemed right up our alley; next time, we'll study the name more closely!) Located in L.A.'s booming drive-by-shooting district, the club certainly has its charm...and we got a nice big piece of it when we were herded through the metal detector upon entering. Inside, pink neon palm trees, a shimmering silver curtain, and a multitude of colorful balloons made the club look like the prom scene from the film *Falley Girl* (y'know, the part at the end where Josie Cotton sings -- and we don't think this was intentional -- "Johnny, Are You Queer?"). Our hostess for the evening -- the lovely Miss Meka -- oversaw a lip-synch contest as well as an exotic dance and fashion show while repeatedly announcing who "the white guys" were, as well as mentioning -- much to the crowd's obvious dissatisfaction and our terror -- that the night's events would be written about in a column called *Freek Show*. Most of the exotic dance show was too hot to be photographed, but we'll try to describe it to you to the best of our ability: Bump, grind, get money thrown all over you, stick yo' ass in somebody's face...bump, grind, repeat...bring to a boil, garnish, and serve. Booty now for the future!

Epitaph Records' Punk-O-Rama tour took over the Palace last Friday night, but rather than deal with that club's thuggish security chimp once again, we just dropped by the label earlier in the day to grab some grub at their official Punk-O-Rama Barbecue. While munching on watermelon, endless handfuls of chocolate chip cookies, hot dogs, *carne asada*, and burgers (both real and veggie), *Freek Show* made the scene with ex-Circle Jerk Keith Morris (whose band -- Midget Handjob -- will have their debut album released soon on Epitaph); label-owner-who-now-just-shows-up-to-afternoon-barbecues Brett Gurewitz, an assortment of punks whose origin is still unclear; and members of such Punk-O-Rama bands as the Bouncing Souls, Dropkick Murphys, and the Dwarves. (Sadly, the gurls from the Distillers, who we really had our heart set on dining with, called in sick.) Clothing designer Deborah Viereck -- whose company 't ain't responsible for some of those flashy threads that you see on Marilyn Manson, Korn's Jonathan Davis, and Gwen Stefani of No Doubt -- showed up looking very punk (or was it New Wave?) in a black cotton/spandex thing held together by red plastic tape. (Of course, this wasn't as "punk" as the one Epitaph band member -- we won't mention his name -- who was seen grabbing salad out of the salad bowl with his bare hands!)

The rural cactus garden/hillside setting of the Epitaph compound on Sunset Boulevard -- which is housed inside a former stop location for L.A.'s infamous Red Car line -- proved to be the perfect environment for an afternoon affair like this, and the whole thing had sort of a Yellowstone National Park-meets-the last day of school picnic vibe to it...only with tattoos. In fact, the only disappointment of the afternoon was that the Dwarves didn't engage in any of the dangerous and bloody shenanigans that they're known for onstage; we were hoping for a food fight of the highest caliber...

And finally, on Saturday, Hollywood Monsters (www.hollywoodmonsters.net) held its anniversary party at that hair-band-happy hunting ground, the Coconut Teaszer, making for yet another wild 'n' woolly night on the Sunset Strip. Backed by the credo "sex, clubs and rock 'n' roll," Hollywood Monsters is one of the finer Web lairs for finding out all the necessary gossip in the local underground rock scene, most of which is dished out in diary form in the deliciously deranged *Rock 'N' Roll Rehab* column. Strip trash and rock 'n' roll tourists alike crowded into the club for the party and rocked out to a variety of local sounds, from the sexy-industro-rage of Idol Worship to the glam-slamm'n' pop of Girls Crash Cars and Bubble. At the stroke of midnight, Budgie, the mind behind the monster, took the Teaszer stage and launched an unlimited supply of Red Balls gift bags (and a pair of panties) stuffed full of T-shirts, posters, stickers, and CDs into the crowd. We even heard a vintage Brian Eno song blaring over the P.A. between bands, which was almost -- we said almost -- enough to block out the fact that we were hanging out at the Teaszer on a Saturday night. As always, the surplus of leather, vinyl, cowboy hats, and other assorted rock-wear made the heat inside unbearable, driving all the real Hollywood monsters onto the club's outdoor patio to enjoy either the Teaszer's repulsive yet highly publicized taco/quesadilla creations or the mysterious chocolate cake with blueberry filling that was circulating. *Hmmm...Brian Eno, cake, and panties!* Can all this really be happening at the Coconut Teaszer?!

Next week: Talk about six degrees of *Freek Show*! Billy Preston and Keith Morris are spotted riding dueling mechanical bulls during "Pussy Galore Night" at the Gig! -- Jim Freek

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