

THE BIRTH OF SHARON/RULE OF FUN/MALCOLM BENNETT Bristol

RULE OF Fun ignored whatever rules they were following and the trail of Miles Davis (agh! art!) was well and truly lost. No fun, no funk.

Malcolm Bennett's abrasive brand of Liverpudlian battle poetry has been a welcome sore on the body of the local art politic and, combined with the synthesised soundscapes of Steve Hayley, it's made his work (original and interpreted) more accessible. The stagecraft is more polished, with plenty of hand on hip gun-sliding delivery and a furiously physical presence to the man. Mally will break out of the local stranglehand yet.

On a local scene that has only recently started to generate some fresh momentum, the debut recordings of Birth Of Sharon have been one of the most regular pointers to a positive direction. Formed from a combination of personnel from the anarcho avant-garde antics of Harry And Hilary —

personified by vocalist Andy Fairley — and the direct exuberance of Animal Magic, it gives Birth Of Sharon a wide range of options, and they don't restrict themselves.

Again there are rules to the game, as to mix instruments and voices to synthesise words and sounds requires discipline. On the night, the group were hampered by a terrible treatment from the PA, with the drums barely audible and vocals muggy, and for music that draws in the complexities of a Beefheart or Ubu (and the chances that a Chance or Skidoo would take) that means bad news for performer and listener alike.

With songs like 'Now' or 'Sex Is A Language', they would represent just the kind of records that I'd like to hear in a club with genuinely discerning taste, but the production and presentation would have to be exactly right. In the setting of this gig, the group were only able to convey frustration, too much volume and not enough detail. A pity because I'd like to see Birth Of Sharon be more than just a cult indie band. Perhaps the child must be given more time to grow.

DAVE MASSEY

THE PASTELS/ STRAWBERRY SWITCHBLADE Glasgow

A SPARSE and sprinkled audience is present tonight to witness Strawberry Switchblade and the fruity Pastels (amongst others) performing under the banner of 'The Spontaneous Happening', to investigate the rumours that Channel Four cameras would be here to record the event and to sample Glasgow's pop scene.

As it turned out, the absence of such cameras was more of a relief than anything else and, by

sounded. They 'doo-bee-doo' their way through their last and most uplifting of the songs and leave favourites to win the next election (you can't get away from it).

The Pastels, however, are like children, smiling endlessly and childishly, whilst almost giggling through guitars and cardigans. Their puerile, boyish pop songs portray an Only Ones/Jonathan Richman And The Modern Lovers cross-breeding, with traces of the Buzzcocks for good measure. Whilst they play, a girl Pastel paints in the background.

By the third number, 'I Like Painting' (the new single on



AMAZON'S LORI Chacko: things go better with her t-shirt

Typically tropical

AMAZON Fulham Greyhound

THE DELIGHTFUL Lori Chacko's disaffection with all things

in strong vocal form.

But... she seemed hampered throughout by nerves and sheer lack of space on stage, the result being that she was virtually unstaged by the carefree abandon of one of her

Tim Tim