

clocker the needles maple lift

[LAVA, MONDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER]

Does *anyone* really care about Clocker any more? Didn't they cease to be a going concern ages ago, when Pete left and they grew up and suddenly started writing mature songs and got a session musician instead of a bassist? That was the story that I heard; apparently no-one was interested in what remained of Aberdeen's most promising young band now they had degenerated into a dull, angsty prog-rock version of their former selves. Well, one way or another I would be discovering the truth about Clocker tonite. Not to mention clocking the amount of cute freshers that would be in the building! (From a strictly scientific viewpoint, of course. My girlfriend does read Fudge sometimes.)

Random fact: If you buy a 1 litre can of beer (yes, they do exist) and hold it in your hand, it looks as if your body has shrunk. Though this is nothing compared to the amazing shrinking act that **Lift** manage to pull off - how can four guys making so much fine noise have so little stage presence? I've seen more animation than this in an episode of South Park.

I reach the conclusion, during Lift's set, that I am not very good at judging indie bands. This one makes all the right noises, and plays well and sings nicely, but is it good enough? My fears are confirmed later when the words '*Lift*' '*fucking*' and '*shite*' crop up in conversation with Al Nero. And it wasn't me that said them. Phew!

Maple annoy me because they are too damn good for fucking around in Aberdeen. Get your act together guys, do you have any idea how many great songs you have? Well I'll tell you: 11. I don't know why, but I'm gonna blame women for Maple's problems. I feel like being a feminist today, only the guy's version of whatever that is. Masculinist? Chauvinist? Ned? Ah, that one will do. OK, so here's the theory: Band are good, very good. They go to London and are courted by several record companies. Somehow, it doesn't work out so they return to their dayjobs in Shitsville, fitting band duties in as best they can around their busy lives. One nite stands are replaced by girlfriends, who in turn are replaced by long term girlfriends. Autumn moves into winter and the leaves start to fall... In short, half the band get married, grow up and lose the passion and determination they once had. Mosh-pits are replaced by mortgages, screaming fans by screaming brats. OK, I'm embellishing this a bit, but it sounds good, doesn't it? Maple: you're great, but why not make a bit of an effort to get some people along to see you? Are you too grown up to stand outside The Palace and give out flyers in the freezing cold? Would you really rather play to a handful of mums and dads than a room full of impressionable nu-metal kids? Cos if you're not bothered about this gig, then why should anyone else be? Grrr! OK, I must go and take my anti-bitch tablets now. I think I missed this morning's dose.

In fact the same story could probably be said about **The Needles**. (Not the tablets thing, the bit before that.) Dave Dixon? A great entertainer, despite the ill-advised shirt and waistcoat combo. Paul Needles? A fine, lanky bass player. Sandy? A great, permanently-worried guitar destroyer. Plus Johnny Wolf, the creator of the best tom-roll ever. What exactly do The Needles want from life? Surely they're not gonna give up just yet? The new songs are good, if not as memorable as classics like *Call Me* and *In Your Arms Again*, the latter being a candidate for an Ataris song title if ever there was one.

'Remember, the Needles man is the wise man.' How right you are, Mr Dixon.

Adam Keenan is a good looking guy; he's got that cool indie look that Damon Albarn used to have. Al also looks very cool in his **Clocker** baseball cap, especially when he jumps about and hits the keys in that seemingly random manner that keyboardists seem to be able to do without it sounding shit. The guitarist - what's his name again? - also fits in nicely, which leaves us with the problem of the bass player. (Drummers don't count, remember). How can a guy have a ponytail and a leather jacket when he is playing in an indie band? And how come he looks about 50 years older than the others? It's not right, it really isn't. Thankfully he keeps out of sight, as all good session musicians should. Adam is wearing a t-shirt that says '*Robbery Is A Chapter In Etiquette*'. I feel it is important to mention this, though I'm not sure why.

Clocker look very professional. They sound very professional. They are here to do a job. And they do it well, yet it sounds so clinical. Like a whore that won't swallow, you can't help feeling you've been cheated. Why does each song have to be five minutes long? Why can't you rock out more, and be silly and sing about boobies? None of the songs particularly stand out until they play *Symphony*, which isn't surprising given that it was their single, a year ago. Good stuff, even if it does take two minutes to really get going. What else can I say? If this is Al's last gig, and Clocker aren't getting another keyboard player in, they're fucked. His weird sounds are an important part of Clocker's music, not just a luxurious extra. (Think DJs in nu-metal bands.) The new single *Milk* starts off like every other Clocker song; epic, until it stops suddenly and goes into a very cool riff that is hard to describe textually. Oh, go buy the single on Monday and you'll find out. (Do I get a free copy now, Adam?) A catchy little chorus in there as well, I think it's gonna be a good release. Like masturbation.

As a reassurance that Clocker haven't yet lost their inner kid, they end the nite with a chaotic version of Voodoo People. Only Clocker could conceive doing this and actually manage to pull it off. Does anyone care about this band anymore? I think I do, just a tiny bit.

Reviewed by Kai Sirius.