

Review: EH1 Live



Returning for a second year to wear out the soles of Edinburgh gig-goers' shoes, **EH1 Live** landed for a full day of the finest unsigned Scottish music across five of the capital's best venues.

Kicking off the day at **Electric Circus** was Edinburgh two-piece **The Gold Lions**, who unleashed a blunderbuss of blues-rock on the early afternoon crowd. Whilst their White Stripes/Black Keys influences might be obvious, the unswerving eruption of riffs they produced was a joy to behold. Powered by the supercharged engine of Rupert Lee's drumming, 'Cause And Effect' and 'Dark Side' hit like a Mike Tyson right-left. Set closer '1000 Ships' showcased Owen Robertson's whiplash guitar shredding, leaving the audience feeling like they'd been through a sonic tsunami by the end of it. The perfect way to blow away the Sunday morning cobwebs.

Things didn't go quite so well for hotly tipped **The Machine Room** – through no fault of their own. Not only was lead singer John Bryden feeling ill, but his signature vocals were left inaudible by some serious sound feedback in the venue. Combine this with a clipping amp and a temperamental miniature keyboard, and you knew that it just wasn't going to be their day.



This slight lull was quickly forgotten when the **Modern Faces** took to the stage at **The Liquid Rooms**. As direct as a head butt, they were everything you want a Scottish rock band to be and more. Dripping in confidence, the exuberant Dunfermline 5-piece felt more like headliners than a late afternoon ensemble. Tracks like 'Cynical Brother' and 'Pravda Scrolls' combined as good a partnership of indie guitars and

pounding bass backbone as Scotland has produced this side of the millennium. Definitely Fife's finest export of recent years.

And if you like chalk with your cheese you were in the right place. Next up at The Liquid Rooms was **The Merrylees**, whose sprawling gypsy folk brings a whole new meaning to the word funky. Beefed up into a 7-piece with the addition of a live violinist and trumpeter, their wild-west hooks and leftfield leanings definitely got the crowd jiving. And no matter what your personal preferences, songs like '(Farewell) Dry Land' make it impossible not to get your foot tapping.

The Stagger Rats kept things rolling on this decidedly wild track with a 45-minute set that sounded like a party at the end of the universe. Their off-kilter brilliance goes down like a musical sorbet in 2012, sounding fresh, fun and completely nuts. 'Fuzzy Fuzzy' remains their finest work to date, creating a whirlpool of perfect pop harmonies and vibrant guitars.

Following them in the main support slot came local favourites **The OK Social Club**. You know you must be doing something right when the crowd are even chanting your name to the 'Okie Koki' song. Combining infectious vocals with 21st century riffs, the Edinburgh 4-piece are going places fast. Debut single 'The Shape Of Things To Come' sounds just as rip roaring as it does on record whilst next single 'Gezellig' is definitely a hit in the making. But it's 'The Late 90's' that remains the highlight of their set, with its bounding rhythms working perfectly with Raff Eragona's joyous vocals to cap a performance that is about as much fun as you can have without taking your clothes off.



And it was to this atmosphere of verve and vigour that **The Phantom Band** brought their heavy industry rock. More

technically proficient than freewheeling brilliant, it was the band's earlier tracks from *Checkmate Savage* that connected more with the semi-full venue. More brooding than bouncing, 'The Howling' was still able to coax a few hip shakes from the half-intimidated, half-exhausted audience.

Whilst the undercard may have outshone the headliners, **EH1 Live** certainly proved a huge success. It's exactly the type of event that disproves the incessant ignorant moaning about the death of modern music or how things were better in the past. Every band on the bill brought something unique to the day and highlighted the strength and depth of Scottish music. Roll on next year !



All photos by Scott Guthrie