

Matthew E. White – Monday 25th January, Electric Circus



Photo by Shawn
Brackbill

Pure Beauty, the support band from London, was enough to make the trek to Electric Circus worthwhile, even on a Monday night in January in Edinburgh. Despite the cold and lethargy this jazz and funk band, put just enough energetic spring in anyone's step to prepare them for the soulful talent and headliner, Matthew E.White.

Whilst the sound is not renowned for being of a high standard in this venue, situated next to Waverley Train Station and The Fruitmarket Gallery, there was no doubting that it was perfect for Virginia's artist, and one of Domino's acclaimed.

Despite being only a handful of people present for Pure Beauty the talented exhibition of musicians put on a great show. Influenced by funk, with psych and jazz clearly also prevalent, Pure Beauty are as much about displaying an artist freedom on stage. Not concealing their ability to move as well as groove, there is a plentiful supply of solo guitar riffs, almost inaudible vocals and snake-shuffling hips.

Having just received radio-play for new track with Natalie Prass, *Cool Out*, it is pleasing but unsurprising that the gig venue filled up quickly. Looking around the room, as the clincher was fast-approaching it was clear that the demographic was high on those wearing thick-rimmed glasses and sporting colossal facial hair. Approximately three-quarters full, Edinburgh, as an audience, was not too reserved for a Winter's Monday sundown; White complimented them on their dedication and went straight into *Tranquility* from 2015 album,

Fresh Blood.

A late beginning, worth it for that unique, refined sultry sound White fills the Electric Circus with a soulful sound, tranquil and intimate; ideal for a Monday night. With visual nods towards that famous Jack Black High Fidelity scene when he surprises the audience with his rendition of *Let's Get It On* and, personally, Blues Brother scenes, particularly where they are playing venues of the dark, dubious and individual sort. Intimately whispering his sweet nothings to the audience, they are seduced by him and his bass-heavy band.

The performance as a whole had a more soulful sound than the record, with the temptation to sway towards improvisation and jazz fusions; we are indulged with many solos by both White and guitarist Alan Parker. However, successful tracks like *Vision* and *Rock and Roll is Cold* don't quite work the same. Hardworking, enigmatic, pouty band, with no shortage of a shimmy and a side-step appearing, there was a tongue-in-cheek fight for showmanship on stage from both White and Parker. Toe-tapping his hip brown boots, White performed *Fruit Trees* infallibly, with a build that made it worth seeing live.

Incorporating emotive guitar riffs that nostalgically reminded me of films like *Crossroads*, with the talent of Ry Cooder, the crowd could not get enough of Parker's guitar solos, which see him using up the entirety of the stage.

Whilst playing *Take Care* Matt nods in the direction of Ray Charles with his swagger, and *Steady Pace* takes the pace of the gig from exactly that to a more climatic level. Bassist, Cameron Ralston, Parker and White, all throw some side-steps into this formula; evidently men of rhythm, talent and soul. Peaking at *Steady Pace*, the remainder of the gig switched from the build, pivoting to a calmer sound, which then builds again with *Feeling Good Is Good Enough*. With audience contribution, it climaxed before the encore started, and the crowd were shrieking for more; Matt typically produced his peace sign

before following the band off stage.

The encore felt more intimate, if that was possible, White appearing solely with guitar and a promise to play some requested tracks. Edinburgh made the most of this, as they threw suggestions such as *Hot Toddies* and *Will You Love Me*, during which the band appear back on stage for a blow out in time for Randy Newman's track *Sail Away*.

Alan Parker yet again treated us to heightened, southern bluesy instrumental guitar, making this a show of several peaks, builds and pinnacles, seductively pleasing this audience. It's safe to say that this audience will be back for more, if those applauds and shrieks were anything to go by; top-notch Monday night entertainment!