



HARRY ANGEL / WE ROCK LIKE GIRLS **DON'T / DESERT STORM / HARLEQUINN**

The Wheatsheaf

That we should even be thinking Banbury's all-girl rock band Harlequinn are an oddity is disappointing, but the fact is that such bands are all too rare. Oxford has had its successes with all-female groups, with Death By Crimpers, Beaker, and Harlette all enjoying success before they imploded. Harlequinn remind us of the oft-maligned Caliber in that they are heading down a very straight-ahead rock path, which suits them, but it all feels a little bit safe. This is probably best witnessed in their slightly dodgy cover of 'Billy Jean', where they sidestep the solo cleverly, but fail to stamp their authority on the song. A bit more attitude and an urge to tear things up should find them making huge steps forward.

No such problems with Desert Storm, as they fill the stage with attitude - attitude and fucking great riffs. This is consummate stoner rock, and everything Desert Storm do tonight is locked into a groove so deep it probably has no bottom. Iommi-strength riffs stomp all over the audience as a nod-fest slowly evolves into a moshpit. 'Cosmic Drips' oozes class and might well be one of the finest songs written by an Oxford band in the last few years. If there's a better metal band in Oxford at the moment, then we haven't heard them.

We Rock Like Girls Don't do exactly what you expect two girls to do when they have a band name like that. They do indeed rock. As you'd expect from a two-piece the sonic palette is somewhat limited but when it's limited to jet-propelled garage blues it doesn't really matter. PJ Harvey would do well to catch this band and remember that this is the kind of thing she did best.

Harry Angel are back after what seems like an extremely long lay off. Resurrected on Good Friday, it's good to have them back. If anything they've edged away from the full-on gothic rock sound they once had, and embraced a few more dynamics. At times it's bordering on post-rock but then they remember that rock was pretty damn good before it went past the post and kick into the simple things that get the adrenalin rushing. The changes in tone and pace have added to their arsenal and it shouldn't be too long before we're heralding this second coming as something incredible.

Sam Shepherd