

Harry Angel

The Jericho Tavern

I wasn't optimistic about **Harry Angel** when they shuffled onto the stage. They didn't have the manner of a band who were well versed in putting on a gig. Staring defeatedly at their floor pedals while guitar strings struggled to find their tuning... guitarist and keyboard player **Dan Lordan** picked up what appeared to be a medicine bottle from the floor, studied the label, and then downed the contents in one swift movement of the neck.

The guitar amps were turned on and a white noise blast of electronic distortion ripped through my ear drums. I was worried – was this going to be some kind of drunken punk act? An abrasive blast of three chord pop rock?

The band begun their first song and my worries were instantly forgotten. The shadowy candle lit confines of the **Jericho** stage were now awash in a wave of reverberating guitars, pulsating bass rhythms and emotive vocals and lyrics. "Gothic punk wailings in a monastery" is what I have written in my notepad, and that's as close as I

can get to putting the sound of this band in words. Its huge, cavernous... closing my eyes I felt entirely immersed.

Their set was varied; bassist **Hayley Phillips** sometimes taking the lead vocals for punkier numbers, and the songs themselves changed from eighties reverb soaked rock to **Nirvana** style discord laden grunge. But its tracks like "**Watching Her Drown**" and "**Mine**" where the bands sound really comes into its own; an atmospheric wall of noise surging forward on **Andy Wright's** unique and tribal sounding drums. Taking centre stage, front man **Chris Beard** is energetic and immediately likable – hopping to the rhythms and wrestling with the mic stand as if being attacked by a murderous snake.

The band ended on final wave of feedback and rolling synth's, the candles flickering as the air moved with one last chord. **Harry Angel** left the stage to rapturous applause – a powerful and progressive band, they can be counted among Oxford's best.

