

Britain's The Jazz Butcher acclaimed here — with gusto

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Friday night in Guelph — what to do? Eager enthusiasts of intelligent fun knew precisely where it was at — the Loft on Carden Street. CFRU-FM presented delighted ears with England's Jazz Butcher Conspiracy and added Toronto's witty Chris Houston to start the festivities.

Houston, a one — man musical menagerie went unappreciated by the earlier, younger audience who were too timid to dance to his vision of contemporary chaos. But the older throng shimmied to his astute, angry vocals and bopped to his rockabilly roll. Dressed in a tacky yet chic polyester outfit with billowing bell bottoms, Houston took the crowd down a highly unsentimental memory lane. Formerly of punkdom's The Forgotten Rebels, his style has diversified but the terrain is still tough. The harrowing needle of heroin was injected in the Rebels' anti-drug classic "Surfin' on Heroin." This new version switches the pace from thrash to swing and intensifies lines like: "we ain't junkies/we just snort the stuff."

Songs like the anti-racist N.R.A.K.K.K. dealt with the Ku Klux

Klan. Whether yodelling like Elvis or preaching on social decay, Houston's work was rarely pretty yet often funny. He handled hecklers with angry aplomb and later noted that such tension is conducive to a good performance. Still, one has to wonder why people should turn so ugly so easily? It is a shame some preferred ignorance to illumination.

Headliners The Jazz Butcher were treated with royal gusto. These "poppets" of dirty pop played with brilliant cheek, offering an ample portion of their many import and newest domestic releases. Their sly wit was best showcased in "The Human Jungle," the garish "Caroline Wheeler," and the gloomy "Walk With the Devil." Featuring Pat on vocals and brilliant adlibs, the wonderful guitar of Max Eider on a fan's fervent stool, Mr. Jones on vital drums, and Felix on groovy bass these blokes play for the people not the pocketbook. At the end of their final, sweaty set the dancefloor would not let them go. Encores that appeared included the slinky "Partytime" and Lou Reed's exceptional "Waiting for My Man." We will be waiting again and for-

ever for these tart treats to return!

Pat and his shy, sweet cohort Max Eider took time to discuss vegetarianism, the music industry, and more. Al-

though hungry they did not want for thirst and traced their 1983 debut with the lp. "Bath of Bacon" through to the current "Bloody Nonsense." Although their line-up has changed throughout, Pat and Max remain right tight mates. At one point, both Kevin Haskins and David J. of Bauhaus fame contributed to the band. Pat noted that he and David are "sisters" of the soul in their similarities. David's acoustic solo work is a definite influence on the Jazz Butcher vinyl.

They've found Canadian audiences a tad more reserved than the Brits but we appear less fickle. The restless climate of Britain both economically and politically breeds boredom. Pat found a recent Toronto gig particularly energetic and enjoys our vegetarian cuisine. Asked why three years passed before their records gained wider distribution, they remark that they wanted to maintain creative control. Yet Pat argued that people are unadventurous in their musical tastes because only the mainstream is marketed in their direction. And he never feels immune to critics, rather he respects their input for the most part. Judging by the audience's reaction, the truest critics lurked in the hearts of Friday night.