WHY KEITH LEVENE RESENTS JOHN LYDON
PLUS UK CONCERT REVIEW

A LUNG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
THE IMMACULATE CONSUMPTIVE INFECTS AMERICA'S EAST COAST
STORY: CHRIS BOHN • PHOTOGRAPHY: ANTON CORBIJN

STONES LP REVIEW • PLIMSOULS • SEX GANG CHILDREN • FLESHTONES • EDDY GRANT • FLESH FOR LULU
IN DESPERATION, men armed with Disgrace hop in and out of traffic sponging windscreens unsolicited, risking their scrawny limbs for a dime.

Others stick to sidewalks pleading, "I'm not a bum, I'm not a bum," and then hit passers-by for loose change.

The more fortunate, whose last assets — their youthful bodies — haven't yet submitted to the ravages of war and disease, join them on the streets. No longer needing to trade in the darkness of doorways, they've come out into the open to flaunt their goods where the marks are.

Daytime, nighttime, anytime, anywhere, it doesn't make any difference in the perpetual twilight of America.

Survival is too hazy a dream for this scratching away at existence. The rosy hues of beat romanticism provide no comfort growing to the uptight who drift across the continent. They must seek their own warmth, as does the man who fiddles over a gutful pile of ashes in a Washington mainstreet, or those who anxiously wait to be moved on from the all-night store entrances.

In the meantime they catch occasional glints of heat and watch the capital's bureaucrats crawling for kettles for girls. Or boys.

In New York, where the underworld traditionally meets the elite down on 42nd Street, contrasts come faster, providing an orgy for the uninitiated eyes of elevator, armchair and camera magazine, galleries, legs and nightgowns, whatever your voyeuristic pleasure, you'll find it there.

But hey, we've not come to Hell to hand out the almanac! How you for that. How does the Nelson Algren look to you? "Don't look me in the eye — how do I look? It's just something, Cousin, it's here!" Or as one Algren junkie said to another: "You needn't make it 'Good riddance.' Good riddance is strictly for somebody's imagination!

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT which might once have bound New Yorkers to do right by their fellow citizens was long ago terminated. Unfair welfare inadequately cushions falls. Be at your nest whichever way you can.

In the No Go zones such as Alphabet City, an A to Z of dark tenements, rank humanity, empty signs, dope and weaponry, people do good trade in each other's misery. For a number of reasons the four members of The Immaculate Consumptive, the non-stop revue put together for Halloween and featuring Marc Almond, Nick Cave (fresh from the broken up Birthday Party), Lydia Lunch and Clint Ruin (taking time off from You've Got Foetid On Your Breath), find themselves at home here, not the least because accommodation — as well as life — is cheap on Slaughter Street.

Perhaps they also find some very satisfaction in seeing the varying emotional terrains each of them has mapped out to savagely and sardonically made physical before their eyes.

The desperate humor the situation engenders undoubtedly appeals to their gallows sense of fun. "Left where I was staying one day," relates a bemused Nick Cave, "and this row of bums sitting up against the wall started laughing at me. It's one thing when your Mom laughs at the way you look, but these bums! It comes to something when the bums dress better than you."

The Immaculate Consumptive: sons for staying off starvation!

"We were standing round at some stupid club," says founding Consumptive Lydia Lunch, "the four of us, Mu, Larry, Curly, etc. and when I looked at them I saw all had the same glint in their sleepy, weepy eyes. I said, Hey, I'm going to New York on Halloween, you wanna come? Let's do something different, bang ol' bang. That way I could come home and get paid for it."

"And we do have certain things in common, big hair for one. We're all dedicated to some of the same principles, although our aesthetics may be different."

"I suppose various things had drawn us together," laughs Marc Almond. "We'd heard of each other's reputations or notoriety. We were drawn together as Lydia says, by our love of the same things: truth, love, art as beauty. All of us use misery — to use Clint's term — as positive negativism. Meaning, we're very miserable people, but in a positive way! We're the most cheerful miseries I know."

"The imagery the four of us use is really desolate, Neil's, brown, remarks Clint Ruin. "Urban despair and that sort of thing from the bottoms of whatever. But out of that misery, out of the intensity of its experience something positive this way comes."

"If I were to describe the collective personality given to us by a not over imaginative music press," protests Nick Cave, "they do tend to dwell on Marc,
Lydia and me as being completely minorly guts. That's one common bond between us, I suppose. Another is that we have the Master of Ceremonies, whose name has made the tour enjoyable so far.

And three, how the bloody hell does one throw a party? The fourth for a photo session. Nick says, "I need a prop." Pulling out a bottle of whisky, he adds, "This'll do.

That's the prop, honey," sneers Lydia. "That's the prop.

Well, all the plays, rows and intrigues add to the atmosphere," asserts Marc. "It's all superficial and, anyway, if we were all wonderfully behaved to start with.

To recap: Embracing misery? Positive...

I reduce it all to filth," laments Lydia. Well-ok, let's go wallowing!

BJ or not "BJ?", just what is the Consummate Consumer? And how does SungTang states in her essay "Illness As a Metaphor" the myth of tabula the last episode in the long career of the ancient of Dolor— which was the artist's disease, according to the ruling into another song, here A four participants are the most artistic people you're ever going to come across.

Never have a slicker crew come under scrutiny.

We're the unluckiest looking people know it.

And this is why they keep the laughs.

This is precisely what their sickly might stand as a haven to the rabid, the joyless, the lovers. And while Clint Run later, but for the moment let's take a closer look at what this whole sick crew went on to believe.

As described as a temporary thing for a short time.

And this is precisely why they keep the laughs.

They eventually ended up playing thirty-three of us as the singer in the first part of the interview, in fact.

Closer casual fulfillment—and along with the deuce of the Birthday Party he contributed to his criminally shelved LP, "Mr. Meano" with Marc on "The Memphis, "Get a Group, "Yum Yum" with "The Fabulous Jokes, "An alternative Cannon Ball," Jokes Marc.

The Consummate Consumer is a complex and their various visions. It seems them working through an hour long set either isolation or as a mere reflection of the hectic pace dictating the various companies containing most all the musical backing, with the four themes still playing this unyielding mashing on the Run Amuck composition, "Body Unknown," which features Mike's homemade bottled vocals, Run on drum and Lydia on guitar. The latter is an especially accentuated with so many characters, from the reservedness to the system, ranging from Lydia's last assertions through to Nick's crowning achievement, a staggering version of Presley's "The Godfather,"

The haunting vector of Lydia's vocal opens the show, starting off on a stately manner. She's doubled up on a guitar and Lydia Run on sax. Her songs come on like a dialogue between her and God, the entire banding the latter for putting her here in the first place.

Her complaints against existence are stated with malice will in a singular monologue, remaining — and generally having no ground — on wearing down the listener's resistance to the point of convincing him to believe against Lydia's will. But wear one anybody who acknowledges such pleasure with a smattering of applause.

Don't interrupt the silence, she's repeating. She says another song, into another song. Lister, Marc will wonder why nobody's clapping — "Now don't get me out of my wits, she will admonish them, dismissively.

Whatever, Lydia's sarcasm very becoming; proving she's the vulture, alwaysiding around.

It's wonderfully woe when contrasted with the all-lower case white and black in no conditions attached, which sees the last solid ground being the final digital character of the Southern. And in her second song, "The Godfather,"

A verbose, debatable, it's the shatter of the heart of hope and they may dream of sharing his sorrows.


"Worse luck," says Lydia, "Why I can't stand all of you."

She is that kind of melancholic hatred, a symbol of time, and this is a love that's over with, just like the beginning of Love Amongst The Ruined, an expertly overdubbed parody of a big self-pitying ballad carried by a runaway musical track composed with Ms. Romantic and Lydia Run and Clint Run (originally for a Some Bizarre collaboration).

Remorseful words pour out presently, all of them as intensely personal as they are intentionally funny, ultimately leading Marc to the delightful off-the-rails chorus: "We're wailing at the stations For our train to ruin...

"You're excusing me too much, " he shrugs, when his final solo song, "You'll Never Sit Me On A Horse," Sunday is greeted with silence by a Dancenator audience who delivers it with Lydia's original adoration. "I have to go in a beat number. For which he's joined by Run on a fair beat of "A Million Maker,"

Once back onstage, Clint Run loses himself in a performance of complete abandon and straining, which does not permit the dancing Dancenate audience the option of ignoring him. Considering that the Nuance and Consumption celebration, the live debut of You've Got Foetus On Your Breasts was the reducative group's first performance alongside Vinyl Waltz and the yet-to-be-identified second, its impact is astounding.

He sets up a visual frenzy to match the ferocity of the music, throwing his body out of shape to be the bizarrely synchronised, Hot Horse, and taking his voice from a low grow to a high soaring shriek. There is more, beautifully, not in the level of hysteria, here established as the norm. Things can only get more dire.

And they do! One song, "He's Famine," less predictable but more NME's "Mad Mike's Mad" but it's a blazingly funny account (I think of being called a "high-end rock writer," "Who I've met before the Matte Receptionist," or that they're on to master something.

He's a little Lynch. Read it whichever way you will.

When his Foetus partner Frank Waltz told NME that it was, "the night before we were in the right to get angry at anything, it was an absolute thrill for me to be as a metaphor for the fucking New York Dandies, that night. By the end of this short set he has hurled himself at the second, uncomprehending audience. The floor and the walls, he has smashed bottles against his seemingly impervious body and crashed the piano—irreparably on loan from Brian Eno and his house, the audience who staged the malarial fever, the whole thing is a mess.

That's not the case with Lydia's disordered and assorted debts.

By default he's created the grandest ambience for Nick Cave for his universe.

Crunched glass under the millionaire's empty stares of the Presley's hymn. In 'The Ghost to whom the wind whispered.' Song's haunting strings have been lifted from the original, tape looped and played in a new set conjured up by EinSteinKandzukain's Bikes. Buried's scumbest gold guitar figure.

People take the idea of Cave covering Presley as a joke, then smiles are quickly dismissed by the suburban emotional charge of his voice. Not that it doesn't carry a hint of the blues, sleeve, and that makes his voice to some distant heaven and the obscure stage lights frames his rat-tam-tam of hair like a halo.

And though the caustic nature of the song is odd with The Birthday Party's, a very somberly, there is no doubting the love he has for it. He is a genuinely majestic reading, imbued with real tragedy.

From the deepest recess of his soul— oh alright, the pit of his stomach — Cave lets rip a remarkable aborigine below that signals the finale, 'Body Unknown,' a lurid murder mystery featuring the whole sick crew. His howl merges with a yowl of taped feedback to undermine Marc's giggly narrative. It would have made a great finish, even by New York The Consummates take two endings, and the first night Clint Run has left the stage in such a state of ruin that Nick Cave Can't make up the piano for a final song, his hitherto unheard 'Box For Black Paul.' The second night he gets mad through it before anyone around and misses the point of him. "I'm really angry," storms Clint Run afterwards.

"That's no way to finish." Go out with a childish bang!

Though all four are apparently uncoordinated in one way or another with The End, each has a different idea of how it should come. Nick's vocal breaking blues dinge might not be out of keeping with the show's unpredictability quotient, but that doesn't make it the most satisfactory close.

Then there's the four strong wills that make The Immaculate Consummate the tragedy exciting and unerringly absorbing itself. It's more surprising that they ever arrived at all beginning.

What do CLINT RUN could've got his anger in fudging songs that might raise the whole human race against him, he would possibly always better at it.

Anyone who has heard his work with the various Foetus mutations will have already noted his predilection for chiselling himself pillars and then

CONTINUES OVER
Having already spilled one bottle across the studio floor and consumed most of another, knowing why Lydia Lunch got seven minutes to his and Clinton’s three minutes combined.

“I’m big in New York,” Lydia volunteers from the floor.

“Well, so am I,” Nick responds.

“Then why are you not wearing a head, dear?”

Well, only 50,000 people get to see the show, apparently.

IT’S NOT ALWAYS apparent by now, Nick and Lydia aren’t the good ol’ days they once were. When they’re not crying with each other they playfully (or otherwise) beat one another: Nick playing good-naturedly fornicating to Lydia’s cobra. In the meantime, Lydia has forged a stronger working partnership with Clinton which will manifest itself in the future in projects such as Stintfish (!) and (The sound of dual settling on the rubble) and Hard Diamond (unfortunately).

We share the same philosophy of truth, beauty, love and thith..." remarks Clinton. "And, also, we like to fuck each other’s brains out!"

"Clinton and I co-existed," says Lydia, who might possibly be the offspring of the unlikely mating of Charles Bukowski and Robert Lynch. "Let me put it this way. The same two things that don’t impress us, which means we’re not affected by the same debilitating destructive things a lot of people have. Things that don’t bother us. We are not phased and we are determined to operate the same kind of thing. I want what I want when I want it. And I can have it. And I can get it."

"Chew up and spit out?"

"Yeah, well, people who know me know what I’m like. Misconceptions are ever present. Then, part of my philosophy is don’t assume, because if you immediately assume you’re guessing, and then you’re incorrect. So what are you fucking doing?"

"We’re in a company that..."

"I’m not as miserable as I used to be, although I think (I’ve been in a company that...) we’re often subjected to more pressure. More pressure in the company where bowling has been dropped and there have been cutbacks."

"I haven’t loved myself enough. I haven’t enough through reasons through time because..."

"Sometimes there’s no room to..."

"Fears have been growing larger and there have been stabulations and..."

"Since as a child I’ve been submerged in an incredible anxiety about my..."

"It’s certainly better than no sensation. It’s better to be dying than to be nothing. It just is."

"The man on the other hand loved the life of Reilly all down the line and because they had the life of Reilly they have to create their own problems in their head."

"Which brings me to my new profession. I feel maybe that in my middle age I have a three storey brownstone and on each floor I would have one of my favourite professions. One on would be the psychological or marriage counsellor, so I could blacken a rich husbandry—a reality of my favourite professions. The more undesirable ones would be to the basement because it’s a clinic where under severe instruction they would have the entire spectrum of that readily altered through whatever gross and corrupt fantasy they could muster, thereby getting themselves a check for the rest of the week, until it was time for that Friday afternoon appointment."

"In other words, I want to be up all my best and valuable talents."

"Singin’ doesn’t figure in the future, then?"

"My voice is rather sluggish," she calmly admits.

"But that doesn’t mean I play songs to drive everyone to sleep, though, pu-lease, don’t fright the urge."

IT’S HALLOWEEN. Lydia is out with Clinton scaring the little high rollers of the neighbourhood by screaming into their masked faces. The night before, Nick was pulling the oldest stunts, cracking and glasses from the hustlers and props in Times Square.

"Excuse me, what are you staring at?" he challenges one bum in a Greek fez.

"Your hair really like your haircut."

"Well, take that first lingering look, memorize it and lock the other wide open."

Spoken with quiet menace, Nick, too, seems carrying the tough guy. For the most part on this brief tour, though, he would appear to be suffering from the Long distance runner syndrome. Perhaps it has something to do with the break from The Birthday Party a year or so ago. It’s been a long time for him to win.

The long distance runner syndrome? That is, knowing you have victory in your grasp, only to realize a, thereby ensuring nobody else but yourself shares it, happy in the secret knowledge that you have could have done it had you wanted to. A la Aznavour, I think.

It took Nick three nights to get a chance at blocking publicly his first post-Birthday Party song, 'Box For Black Paul' and midway through he just gave up.

Despite the messed notes and the muffled sound he had the audience rapt, hanging onto every word. Like the best of his Birthday Party songs every line has been distilled from a flurry of activity, so each line at the circumstance of someone’s death, without actually telling on what has happened.

On the forthcoming solo EP from which it comes, the song’s emotional impact accumulates over nine minutes, largely due to Cave’s astonishingly painted vocal. Cutting it short this night effectively killed it.

Oddly, two anecdotes Nick recounted during the long Halloween weekend indicated he might pull something like this. One reveals an obsession with Elvis Presley’s last concert before his death (filmed for This Is Elvis).

"The scholarly approach has it that Presley was only important until he went into the army. Bullshit! I would dispute it totally. He only began to be a true performer in his Las Vegas years, when he began to put across something that could no longer be hidden."

"Here’s a man who’s got everything and he’s getting up onstage only to fail apart. And he couldn’t hide it. He’s embarrassed, sort of humbled and arrogant, a weekender. In this It Elvis he was singing. He looked up. ‘Are You Lonesome Tonight?’ completely. Sweat is forming on his face, his eyes are crazed with drugs and fear, like a trapped animal. He can’t imagine anything, he tells bad jokes in the middle for which he has forgotten the punchlines. But then he concentrates and manages to sing ‘My Way.’ It was a truly inspired performance."

"That’s what it is all about if you ask me. That’s why I thought the last Birthday Party sets were good. What the audience did get to see was the carcass of a group with its members clawing at each other’s throats half the time and for the rest sitting sunk in a corner.

"We weren’t standing onstage smashing to the girls, looking, what a fucking week of a human being I am. But what the audience did get was really emotional performances. Whether it was good or bad in a normal sense doesn’t matter. What is good is what affects me. There is no reason why a group should have to get up onstage and be ‘good’, ‘youthful’ or whatever. Why should I do that way?"

The other anecdote concerns the boxer Roberto Duran who conquered the world in three different weights, became the toast of his home country, a
"I do tend to make overdramatic statements, like I never want to be involved in music again. Immediately after I said it I saw myself as a bit of a defeatist, which is not my thing, really. I want to be a fighter, I don't want to lie down and die. But to me, success is doing something like The Immaculate Consumptives."—Marc Almond

acrimoniously. Marc's affairs ended more happily. "I'm really happy Soft Cell is finishing, so's Dave," he asserts cheerfully. "If we're said it's for silly nostalgic reasons, something like looking through your scrapbook. I can understand all this wallowing and groaning of teeth from our fans. They should be glad we haven't decided to go on to make seven more albums!"

So what was bad about being Marc Almond? "Looking out of the window of my flat and seeing this line of little black things looking back, going ooh-ooh/ai, why do these people want to reflect me, become these wolly little distortions of me? Obviously I can't damn them, because it's the sort of thing I've done myself, but I don't particularly relish seeing the real me in the mirror of a morning, never mind a whole row of little mes!"

Marc's self-leaching reached its peak when the Mambas' 'Tormen And Torerons' was released to mixed reviews. Her put so much of himself into the

record, quite literally laid himself bare in torturous songs too pitiess to allow himself the luxury of welling in self pity.

Quite naturally he took the reviews personally. "I don't care if people slag my work off," he claims, "but if you're going to slag it, please be witty. How dare anyone criticise someone else if they're going to be dull about it!"

Overwrought and underfed, Marc, the friendliest and most accessible of The Immaculate Consumptives, almost cracked under the strain, leading him to issue his "I quit" statement.

"I do tend to make overdramatic statements, like I never want to be involved in music again," laughs Marc unashamed. "Immediately after I said it I saw myself as a bit of a defeatist, which is not my thing, really. I want to be a fighter, I don't want to give up.

"I mean, ever since Soft Cell people have been telling me I've been making all the wrong moves, that I'm not playing by the rules, but me success is being able to do something like The Immaculate Consumptives. It means working with people from whom I get great feedback, it's valuable working with these people.

Naive as it may sound, Marc Almond has always insisted on going his own way and unlike most of pop's great talkers he's actually gone there, putting his money where his mouth is.

That ability to innovate has forsaken the easy route to wealth and America, that is, following in the wake of the invasion Soft Cell's 'Tainted Love' started.

"American invasion, huh? That's a myth," Marc grimaces. "It's not a matter of the British bands changing the American way. It's more that they're changing for the American airwaves, FM-singing themselves. It makes me despair to see it. I couldn't be farther removed from it now."

Instead, he has slipped in the back door with The Immaculate Consumptives, who, like urban guerrillas, easily merge with New York's tacky landscape, under the cloak of their invisibility they can slowly go about undermining the foundations of the phony invasion, tainting the populace with poisonous thoughts.

From Soft Cell to a punkette call. "There seems to be a whole network of people like us four," whispers their most invisible member Gillian Run, "which takes in Einstürzende Neubauten and members of The Birthday Party. All of us have worked together in some way, because we share similar aesthetics, even if the music is diverse.

"Notice? Nervous system more like! Would the world be anywhere near so healthy a place without such paled touch sensitive consumptive across the globe making it jump?"