

## SCRAPING FOETUS OFF THE WHEEL

Amsterdam

THERE IS nothing on stage except for one microphone stand and four plastic beakers. Several cornerstones of rock are being visibly threatened. Truisms like... rock equals instruments, rock equals entertainment, rock is frivolous and disposable. Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel is a one-man opera battering down the walls that define and enclose rock. Its principal character, Clint Ruin/Jim, tears violently to escape from the rock star's body in which he has been trapped.

He begins with a joke, perhaps – a parody of rock's exquisite arrogance, unpeeling his various jackets and holding them at arm's length for his roadie to remove. While rock history reads like three decades of disguises (known collectively as image) to separate audience and performer, SFOTW is about removing the masks, the shell, the person, and laying bare the demons that drive them.

Set against the roar of his nightmare noises (originating not from tapes on stage, but from the mixing desk, thus removing the performer one step further from the trappings of the performance), his words are an unintelligible blur but the sentiments scream loud enough to need no subtitles.

Behind his glasses, his eyes are sunken black pits that stare without seeing. The general impression was: what is this man *on* and how much can we get for twenty guilders? But, however induced, the stumbling degeneration was real. There is no self-indulgence as obsessive as self-abuse and the picture of a hatred turned inwards was a genuine agony. His T-shirt ended up in shreds, covered in the dirt of the Paradiso floor, and we observed all this with interest, as one might watch a drowning man from the shore, too fascinated by the spectacle to throw him a rope.

SFOTW had been on stage for exactly half an hour and left a legacy of noise in his wake – three notes endlessly repeated, *dumdumdum dumdumdum* – beating the meaning of madness for a full six minutes. Outside, above the Paradiso, a neon crucifix rocked in the night sky. There was nothing left on stage but two overturned plastic beakers.

JANE SIMON

# WHEEL OF STEEL

CLINT RUIN: a genuine agony



Kass