

# 120 Minutes Tour produces only muddled results

## MTV 120 MINUTES TOUR

With *BAD II*, *PiL*, *Live*, and *Blind Melon*.

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OPINION EDITOR

Corporate rock reached a new low as the MTV 120 Minutes Tour came to Brandeis University April 16 as part of the Boston Phoenix New Music Poll Celebration. The results were less than stunning.

The most noticeable problem was the sound, an impossible mush. Brandeis' Gossman Center made our own Johnson Athletic Center seem like an acoustical dream. Certainly a major national tour could do better than this. The only band whose sound mix was even bearable was PiL, the third of the four bands.

Opening up was Blind Melon, a newcomer to the national scene. Melon's record company has been hyping them as the Next Big Thing, and in that rarest of events, the band lived up to its hype, putting on a dazzling display of energy, tight playing, and fun.

Lead singer Shannon Horn weaved between the other band members, stopping only to dive into the audience and "surf" along their hands while singing. The best way to describe Blind Melon is kinetic. The members were constantly moving and jamming with each other. The band clearly came to play, and they were amazingly good. Comparisons range from early Faith No More to Guns N' Roses to Pink Floyd-like psychedelia.

Horn dropped his shorts at the end, having

fun with the audience and concluding a powerful and interesting set. He announced that Blind Melon will have an album out by August; if it captures the excitement of their live show, it should be quite a set.

Next up was WFNX favorite Live, whose set was, well, dead. Pardon the obviousness, but that is the best adjective to describe their show. Others are: lethargic, average, and uninspired. Live comes across as yet another of the approximately 4,000 bands currently trying to sound like U2.

The lead singer announced that two of the band members had received stitches that afternoon. It's been a weird day, he said, and it's gonna be a weird show. Too bad it wasn't. At least weird would've been interesting.

The band's singles were played out in muddled arrangements and the crowds' initial warm reception for the band cooled. "We're here in Boston, Massachusetts," they announced, "to start a relationship with three or four thousand people, not to play a rock concert." That explains why I didn't care for their show, because I went to see a rock concert.

The next band was Public Image Limited, Johnny Rotten (a.k.a. John Lydon)'s post-Sex Pistols vehicle. Within the space of the first song, Lydon had removed several condoms from his crotch and thrown them to the crowd. In a significantly more impressive move, he mooned the audience, removed an object from between his cheeks, and tossed it to the crowd. (I think it was a canister of liquid string, but I was wary of further investigation.)

Lydon was in impressive voice, however, and the band played well together. Lydon largely ignored his bandmates on stage, and he busied himself by bantering with the audience. When someone threw a shoe at Lydon, he laughed. "The silly bastard who threw his shoe is not getting it back. Hope you have a nice walk home in the snow!" Later, removing yet another object from his seemingly bottomless shorts, Lydon held it up, asking "Does anyone want to buy a sanitary napkin?" Proving that drunk people will do anything, a large group screamed that they did, and he tossed it into the audience.

Lydon finished the regular set by saying "You want more, you know the routine." After the requisite cheering, he returned and played an encore. The angry young punk Johnny Rotten has turned into a modern dandy, a scolding, doddering fool. The band is nice to listen to, but Rotten has become merely unpleasant.

The final band of the evening was Big Audio Dynamite II, the latest incarnation of Mick Jones' career since The Clash. The lights came on, and a person who appeared to be a band member came out. The crowd went nuts as a "BAD II" sign was revealed in the background and the man — he turned out to be a deejay — began to play an electronic rhythm. For over five minutes, we sat listening to this rhythm. No band, just rhythm. For this, I could go to Narcissus.

Finally, the actual band graced us with their presence. Their set relied heavily on material from their recent "The Globe" disc, with a few exceptions of a few trips into the

catalog of the old BAD lineup. They played some interesting versions of album cuts — notably an electric version of the album's acoustic "Innocent Child," — but the pace was marred by the forced, cheesy playing of synthesized beats between songs. I don't know if Jones thinks this is hip or what, but it serves only to distract from the material.

While the band was playing, however, they were actually pretty good. The singing was weak, or at least it seemed weak in the mix, but the band made even the slowest album cuts really move. All of the familiar album samples were faithfully reproduced. The pauses and holds which work well on record are thrown out live and replaced with driving beats, both from a live drummer and the drum machine, which improved the songs greatly.

But Jones was totally ignorant of the problems of the evening. He seemed oblivious of whether or not the band received any applause, but simply smiled and mumbled unintelligibly into the microphone between songs. At one point, he tried to tell some story about learning the guitar when he was growing up, and he broke into a sudden series of guitar licks. Then he said, "But I got better." The audience didn't understand for the most part, and there was only murmured confusion about what Jones was trying to play.

Overall, it was not the great event I was hoping for. There was, however, some interesting music and the occasional flash of brilliance on this MTV tour. Maybe I'll even start watching "120 Minutes" if I can learn to stand that annoying host.