Thursday March 29th, Dog and Parrot

Apache Viking/Styles Make Fights/Bison Hunting

Bison Hunting enjoyed the prestigious accolade of being anointed the demo of the month in the March issue of Narc.  Fortuitously enough the band were set to play their first gig following a lengthy hiatus the same week that occasioned this acclaim.  Providing support were the more-fun-than-being-drunk-on-a-trampoline Apache Viking, whose Les Savy Fav-esque ditties bring a smile to the otherwise gloomy environs of the Dog and Parrot.  Apache Viking will be playing with Rexine and the Tiny Lights record label’s Pale Man Made in Darlington next month.  I suggest you check them out if you like having a good time (and I know you do).

Following Apache Viking are Pale Man Made label-mates Styles Make Fights, who sadly savour a little of anti-climax as, despite all the plaudits heaped on them in recent memory they’re let down by poor sound.  The band will surely continue their ascent though, especially with the release of latest single ‘All the Things I’ve Done Wrong’ which has caused quite a stir since its release in February.

The aforementioned Bison Hunting demo is of track ‘Testosterone and Tequila’ - a song I likened to Joy Division, largely due to Chris Hopkinson’s vocals and the neat interplay of the low-end with the drums.  This comparison seems to have plagued Bison ever since but it’s hardly an insulting bedfellow for any band to have.  It might be annoying in the same way it might be marginally irritating to Tommy Lee, having a big dick fastened to his renown.   Seeing Bison Hunting live however, goes some way toward explaining the band’s reticence to accept what is clearly a misnomer on my part.

For example, the sinister import of ‘Doom’ is a dextrous march into inventive dynamic.  Hopkinson’s almost spoken baritone jabs at the bass-led verse before it all dilates and finally erupts into Wipers-like riffing and vehement screams.  It then becomes obvious that Bison Hunting have more in common with Pantera than they do with Joy Division.

The set rolls on with more raffish voyages into  Fu-Manchu muscle-vamps.  The posture of the gig, whilst gloriously cavalier is simultaneously bent upon its course.  The songs ebb and flow fluidly and in a well-considered manner, hinged upon one of the best rhythm sections I’ve seen come out of the region.

Just about visible is a comet’s tail trailing guitarist Chris Stainthorpe as he darts around stage like a goosed up electron.  His dual guitar attack with Hopkinson errs just the right side of outlandish, like a cerebral version of all the chest-beating metal you’re sometimes perhaps too ashamed to enjoy.

When we arrive at ‘Testosterone and Tequila’ I am caught off guard by the song’s pull.  The demo does no justice to the live rendition which, coming as it does some way into the set, already sounds like a signature tune that could lead as a single.  It says something about the calibre of Bison Hunting that this demo achieved the praise that it did despite the fact that it doesn’t begin to come close to what they’re actually capable of.

Hopefully the attrition that pressed the band into a sabbatical can now be consigned to memory.  Live, they shook, stabbed, stomped and spat at whatever misconceptions I harboured.  With time they could also repeal their reputation as the North East’s best kept secret and gain the wide-ranging recognition they deserve.