

Written by Jonathan Dean

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AMERICAN PATCHWORK TOUR, WILL'S PUB, ORLANDO, FL, July 13th

This poorly advertised, non-hyped stop on Momus' American Patchwork tour took place at Will's Pub in Orlando, Florida. The venue was too small, with a stage the size of a trophy stand, and a sound system that bordered on Goldstar. The bar was a horribly inappropriate place for Momus to be booked, given the Rockabilly-esque nature of the establishment, which tended to clash with the fey Scottish intelligentsia playing high concept medieval electronic folk. All these concerns aside, however, the show was terrific. The eleven people who showed up were treated to an evening of eclectic and disparate acts - all loosely tied together by some sort of inscrutable aesthetic - but more importantly all belonging to Momus' new record imprint American Patchwork, whose release schedule so far has been bizarre but impressive.

Opening the night were the Super Madrigal Brothers, an electronic duo consisting of a cute little Japanese jailbait mutant with a Prince Valiant haircut and a shaggy white sidekick. They played a continuous set harping on the newly exhausted genre of video game music. The duo was able to keep things fresh, however, by consistently interspersing their Nintendo melodies with a sophisticated labyrinth of distorted motorik beats, squiggly squelches and deconstructions, mathematically calculated for maximum dramatic annoyance. The shaggy white guy had this cool device he called an electronic theremin, which he apparently made himself. I want one.

The Gongs are a foursome, consisting of a childlike female vocalist who plays a homemade guitar thing, two guys who play similar homemade bass/guitar things, and a real dweeby guy in the back who plays a long slide-guitar apparatus inexplicably called "the chucky"; (also homemade, apparently fashioned out of a log). Their music is an amazing art school joke: a submental combination of Jandek-style riffing, Shaggs rhythm section, deadpan vocals and musique concrete. They opened with "The Bat," a real pressure-cooker of a song in which the four repeatedly over-enunciate the phrase "THE BAT IS FLYING AROUND AND AROUND INSIDE THE CAVE"; or something like that. Totally non-musical, completely hilarious and definitely odd.

Then came the real class act of the evening - a fey, highly coiffed Sunset Boulevard tramp named Phillip. He had been lurking around the room all night, and I must admit I did wonder what a precious, Patricia Fields artfag princess like this was doing in a place like Will's. I was just about to invite him out to the local production of Hedwig when he took the stage, looking like he couldn't be bothered to actually perform. Out of a nearby laptop came a cacophonous, arrhythmic mishmash of static, sleazy electro beats and distorted acid guitar. Phillip tried his best to look like he didn't care, but I could tell that his performance was from the heart, even when his half-assed attempt to do the robot fell apart and was quickly abandoned. His debut album, *Pet Cancer*, which I picked up at the show, is highly recommended.

Momus finally took to the stage with little fanfare and no applause. As usual, he had on that damned eyepatch and his scrawny, gawky frame looked sillier than usual in his loose bohemian outfit. His only accompaniment was the laptop, somewhat surprising for a "folk" artist. However, his set mainly focused on material from his medieval electronic hillbilly album "Folktronic"; and some early material that had been reworked into the same general framework. He played all of the outrageous material - "The Penis Song"; and "Coming in a Girl's Mouth."; This was certainly an evening of classy material from a great performer, who despite the extreme minimalism of his arrangements, managed to maximize the energy in the small dingy room, with his absurdly humorous asides and charming demeanor. Momus and his entourage of weird little indie bands

Brainwashed - MOMUS AND PHILLIP, THE GONGS, SUPER MADRIGAL BROTHERS

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made for an enjoyable evening of absurdity and misanthropy. I highly recommend catching the American Patchwork tour as it blazes through a redneck bar near you.