

Ezra Furman and the Boy-Friends. Komedia, August 2016.

Ezra Furman walked on stage at Komedia wearing a giant baby head and then things got even weirder. Bath seemed an odd choice for a band as creative as *Ezra Furman and the Boy-Friends* to choose – a little too middle class, perhaps even a little safe but they certainly kicked things up a gear.

The crowd seemed a mixed bag with as many over forties as excitable teenagers, looking as though they'd fallen out of the Urban Outfitters sale with their parents in tow. This is a fact that was not lost on support act, FUTUR PRIMITIF. When singing a song about remembering childhood, commented in jest to one audience member, "*well you wouldn't remember, you're bald. What is it is with everyone here? this is supposed to be a rock n roll show, you're supposed to be young.*"

FUTUR PRIMITIF's songs were acoustic-lead and his vocal possessed a wonderful rich grit. The style at once called to mind *Fine Art of Self Destruction* era *Jesse Malin* and he cut a humbling figure, with anti-racism songs and telling stories of love, loss and fatherhood. The sound complimented *Ezra Furman* well, setting the scene, as the introspective ballads were not dissimilar to *Furman's* solo effort, 'Year of No Returning' (2012). It wasn't ground breaking stuff but it was honest and heartfelt, the set was short, however by the end you were left wanting to hear more. Which is a good thing as FUTUR PRIMITIF is on the verge of releasing an album very soon.

The main event then, *Ezra Furman's* rhythm section, the *Boy-Friends* walked on stage first, taking their places at the various mic stands dotted around the tiny, smoke-filled stage. The band are an odd mix, you wouldn't expect anything less from a self-professed outsider like *Furman*, yet they gel. There is the high camp of burly men playing saxophone, drums, keyboard and guitar. The musicianship is solid here, well-crafted and complementary to *Ezra's* lithe, gender fluid stage performance. Tonight he strutted on stage, teaming the aforementioned baby mask, with a black silk 1970s jumpsuit and pearls. At first, it seemed like the baby head might be a reference to the song *If I was a baby*, from 'Inside the human body' (2008). However, it was due to *Furman* requesting that we don't take photos or videos and instead enjoy the live experience.

The mask was removed, revealing red lipstick and a shock of turquoise hair. Immediately the band launched into the latest single, 'Teddy I'm Ready' from the latest release, 'Big Fugitive Life' before rolling into 'I Wanna Destroy Myself,' with its genius line, '*all the world is rising up like vomit, filling up my ugly little mouth*'. *Furman* proclaimed that those were the two songs that, '*showed you what we're about*'.

The set was raucous, the saxophones screeched and called, *Furman* flung himself around the stage, beaming continuously and screaming from the top of his lungs. *Furman* was every bit both emulating his heroes of the past, such as *Lou Reed* while also carving his own path. The set mainly consisted of songs from 'Day of the Dog' (2013) and 2015's 'Perpetual Motion People.' It was songs from the latter, that gained the biggest sing-a-longs from the crowd, which seemed mostly made of new fans. 'Restless Year' and 'Lousy Connection' set a precedent, there was no going back. As *Ezra* said, '*I don't want to think about anything but this moment*'. The heat in the room created a fever, the atmosphere was electric, crackling with sweat, expectation and desire. A bluesy re-working of 'And Maybe God is a Train' was stellar.

It would be childish to say there was magic in the air but as the band rounded with an encore of 'Wobbly' and a cover of *Jackie Wilson's* '(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher,' *Furman* crept closer to the edge of the stage, reaching out to the crowd, delight painted on his face, almost as brightly as his lipstick. It is rare to witness a performer so gracious, so grateful and yet clawing, screaming and writhing their way to the top, to the very heart of the even the coldest person in *Komedia* that night.

This Ezra Furman review was written by Jessica Otterwell, a GIGsoup contributor. Edited by Natalie Whitehouse.