

Written by Poppy Beresford, Freelance Critic and Reporter

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“No need for cheap thrills or reinvention”

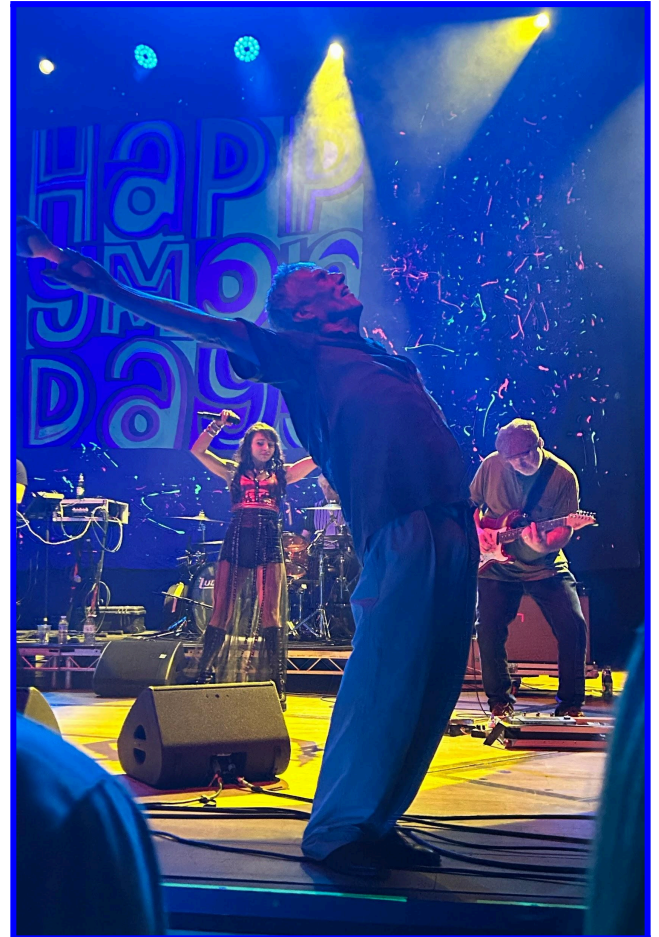
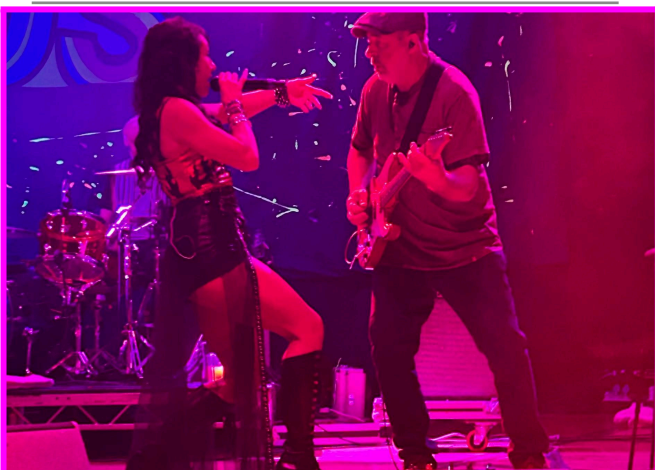
**Happy Mondays, Bristol Beacon
03.04.26**

To be transported back to the 1990's is something of a fantasy to the audiences of 2026, but Happy Mondays are certainly THE band to achieve this. It was truly the best, perhaps most chaotic way to spend a Good Friday: as the halls of the Bristol Beacon filled with acid house, psychedelia and the pure need to dance to the entire hit-after-hit set – the dream if only every night out in Bristol could host Bez and Shaun!

To preface, my knowledge of Happy Mondays and The Farm extends no further than radio hits and their legendary, if not quirky pop culture personas. However, a palpable sense of these bands power and influence emanated from the Beacons doors on Friday; choose love t-shirts, denim jeans, Parker jackets, band t-shirts, the roots of true British street wear were in no way scarce – even announced by Bez,

**‘We don't follow fashion, we
fucking made it’**

Slowly filling with fans young and old, credit must also be given to the fabulous new space the Beacon provides as the spacious yet intimate atmosphere it fosters never fails to amaze.



The Farm, Happy Mondays support act for the night, held the stage like the professionalism of a band who can relax, knowing their music inside and out. It's a privilege to watch a group so effortlessly cool: low strung guitars show that they are no strangers to live performance, and play with recording – standard perfection – it's hard to believe they are playing completely live. Bass and drums thunder across all tracks, with twanging guitars leading infectious flicks and beats. Their sound has not changed at all despite recently releasing a new album after 30 years, a credit to how this genre of alternative rock/dance can stand the test of time. They held a gig of their very own, a very hard thing to do against the illustrious Happy Mondays.

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What can i say about this band that hasn't been praised before. The timeless set up with Shaun's abrasive and punchy voice, chesty bass, heady guitar, unique jungle flutes and orchestrations, soaring atmospheric vocals makes for an absolutely jam-packed sound, filling every second with pure euphoria. Anticipation builds as each member saunters onto stage, comfortable in the knowledge that their music will be known word-for-word for most of their audience - there's no need for cheap thrills or reinvention, they've had this act mastered for decades. But of course, Bez throws himself into this cool, collected band: luminous maracas in hand, and ready to whip the crowd into a dance-frenzy. He is a wizard of acid house, and dances with unmatched ferocity, blessing the crowd with inaudible percussion.



What absolutely made this performance gobsmacking was the perfect sound balance between all instruments and vocals. The added depth by Firouzeh Berry on backing vocals is not to be undervalued, while her polished improvised vocals soar over Shaun's make for a satisfyingly jarring atmosphere - they form a conversationality to their hits, nuanced and brave in the trust between each as musicians. It could be mentioned Shaun seems more hesitant to perform, cracking the occasional smile, yet entering and leaving the stage with little to say, leaving Bez to take the mic and cause absolute chaos in his unfiltered comments on the night.

35 years of 'Pills n' Thrills and Bellyaches' seemed to have passed in seconds, as Happy Mondays have not aged or lost any sense of how to party like seasoned professionals. A night of hit after hit, there is no possibility you could watch them perform without dancing like nobody's watching.