

McFly go back to the future

POP

McFly
Monarch, NW1
David Smyth

PRETTY boy rock band McFly seem to be doing things backwards. Having already toured the nation's arena venues as support to Busted and scored two number-one singles, they chose the week that their debut album hit the top spot to play every guitar group's sweaty training ground, the tiny Barfly club at the Monarch.

This was not a sudden drastic reversal in fortunes, but an exclusive celebration of their chart placing for that strangest of audience demographics — half hysterical teenage girls from the band's fan club, half seen-it-all-before music-industry types. The teenage quartet were also being presented with an award by Guinness as the youngest band ever to enter the UK album charts at number one, a record previously held by The Beatles.

More importantly for a group who acquired their fan base through kid's telly, this was their belated chance to play the kind of sweltering little gig that all unmanufactured hopefuls undergo on a nightly basis. They

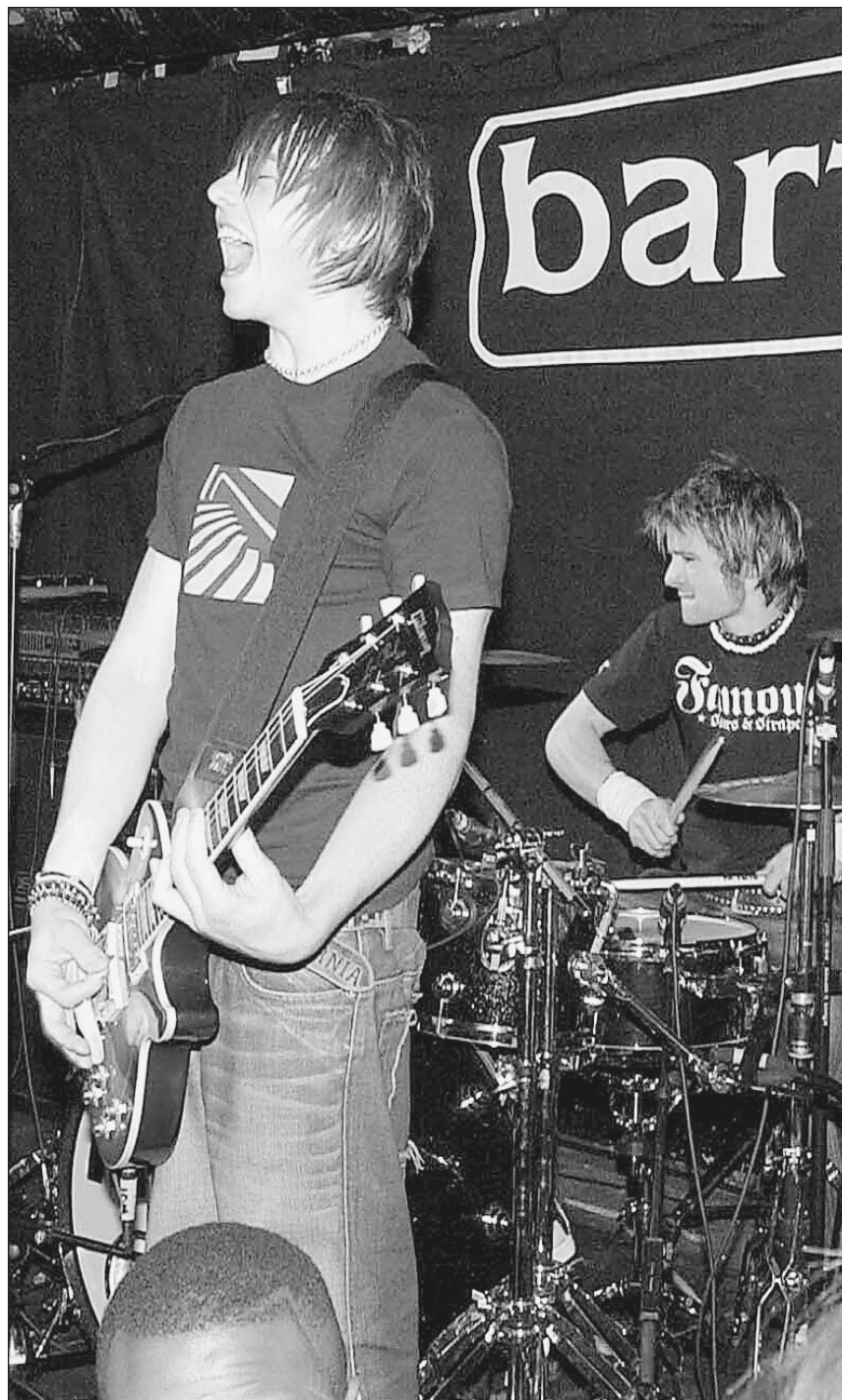
loved it.

Opening with a pleasing blast of feedback and the retro surfer rock of Saturday Night, joint vocalists Tom Fletcher and Danny Jones took turns yelling the lyrics and rambling introductions in-between songs.

This was far from the polished choreography that might have been expected by cynics, who believe McFly exist only to keep Busted's fanbase spending while the older group take a break. They fluffed chords and bumbled song openings, all of which gave the welcome impression that they are a real, human rock band.

They lost rock-and-roll credibility points by dedicating a spirited cover of the Beatles' She Loves You to their parents, but gained some back with Room On The 3rd Floor, a catchy ballad that would not sound out of place on the next Oasis album if the guitars were beefed up a touch.

After just eight songs, including both their number ones, Obviously and Five Colours In Her Hair, and a future chart-topper in the exuberant That Girl, they were gone, leaving a fight over ownership of Harry Judd's drumsticks in their wake. When they play a full show at the Hammersmith Apollo on 12 October, they will be more professional, but hopefully not too professional.



McFly pay their dues at the Barfly: singer Tom Fletcher and drummer Harry Judd

Funny bones need more flesh

COMEDY

Gavin and Gavin
Canal Cafe Theatre, W2
Bruce Dessau

A RECENT Edinburgh Festival development has been an increase in female duos who have paid their drama school fees but not their comedy circuit dues.

There is nothing wrong with actors using the Fringe as a springboard, but the results frequently feel less like heartfelt sets and more like cynical showcases.

Sharon and Lauretta Gavin are typical of this trend. Despite the fact that their Scotland-bound show is called Our Funny Bones, these sisters — an eerie blonde hybrid of the Appletons and Lena Zavaroni — have acres of performing ability yet lack comedy sense.

The only time that this mockumentary on a day in the life of a double act strikes gold is when they fluff lines. Here, they exhibit chemistry that no amount of Stanislavski can teach.

Umpteen characters, from battered council estate fishwives to southern belles tormented by flies, never equal the sparkiness of going off-script. Which, given the paucity of witty lines, is the best place to go.

The accents are impeccable but the gags need sharpening. It is telling that when they parody a pair of unfunny holiday camp comics the non-PC patter goes down better than their own.

These clearly talented siblings are crying out for better writers than themselves. Until then they will attract more casting agents than fans.

● Until Saturday.
Information: 020 7289 6054.

Old and new find the winning formula

EXHIBITION

Fiction
Timothy Taylor Gallery, W1
Nick Hackworth

SUMMER is the silly season for the art world, which moves to the rhythms of wealthy collectors. While they sun themselves in St Tropez, the galleries back home put on group shows of minimal commercial risk, mixing old stock with emerging artists.

Fiction, happily, is better than most exhibitions of this type, bringing

together the work of top draws such as the American Ed Ruscha, the Brazilian photographer Vik Muniz and the Belgian painter Aljys, with new talent from Britain, Germany and Argentina.

The aim, notionally, is to investigate the idea of truth in painting and photography. The theme is of limited interest.

More interesting is the work. Cieslik and Schenk, a Düsseldorf-based duo in their early thirties, create detailed computer-generated images of empty, alienating urban scenes.

In one, a scene after a riot or large public gathering, the metal barriers

and litter have been arranged into a hurdles track running down the road, implying perhaps that the street is always a location for communal but faintly sinister play.

The question this work raises is not one about truth, but about how the art world will assimilate digital art work — as captivating as these images are, they are similar to the many created by computer-games designers and other digital workers everyday. Which is art and which isn't?

Tim Braden will not suffer such problems. His beautiful and delicately ethereal paintings depict scenes culled from literature or his past.

The large work here shows a grand room decorated in the style of the high bourgeoisie, painted, unusually in watercolour on canvas. This gives it an insubstantiality akin to the lightness of human memories.

The best piece by the old guard is also one of the oldest: a series from the late Sixties by Ruscha of black-and-white photos of parking lots taken from the sky, a vantage point that reveals the accidental patterns created by our sterile and utilitarian architecture and urban planning.

● Until 4 September.
Information: 020 7409 3344.



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Together We're Heavy

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