

# Good roots, tender shoots

THE Elastic Head Band is more elastic than band. The atmosphere of their show is one of a musicians' jam-session at which an audience happens to have congregated.

There is no ceremony whatsoever, and except for the odd confidential aside, the musos get on with playing the music without much regard for the audience. That style has an appeal, but in the end it allows the band to dodge responsibility for working hard on entertainment.

Very seldom do they combine everything into a strong composite sound — most of the time it's a case of providing adequate but uninspired backing for whichever member is doing his numbers.

This appeals greatly to ageing heads with nostalgic

## FOLK ROCK Patrick Lee Roots and Shoots Market Upstairs

memories of the days when rock was undergoing its sixties renaissance, but is not satisfactory for a seated audience waiting eagerly for one of the rare rock shows.

John Oakley Smith is individually so far ahead of his colleagues that every one of them has difficulty recapturing the audience between his numbers. A rare performer, both live and on record, Oakley Smith reminds with this appearance that he is a contender for top singer-songwriter in this country.

David Marks delivers his numbers with confident ease. His lyrics sample some tragi-crazy scenes

from local life, and easily find the humour in them. His "Let the Bad Times Roll" is the rocker which gets the most synergy running between the band and their audience.

After whipping some smart licks off his electric guitar in the first half, Mike Dickman opens after interval with a sluggish acoustic set. Leonie Hofmeyr, who's role has been largely decorative to this point, takes on Oakley Smith's "Matinees on Saturdays" and loses. Oakley himself picks up the show with "Starship", and later goes on to a spellbinding performance of "Wax Museum."

The concept behind the Elastic Head Band and the show is viable: in a sound-world dominated by imported pop/disco, it's very valuable to have a showcase for

local songwriters who are something more than Top Twenty aspirants.

Unfortunately, "Roots and Shoots" does not exploit the opportunity to the full. The casual presentation works against the aim of showcasing the writing. Information about the compositions would have been valuable, seeing few of them have been heard before, and probably less will ever be heard again.

The indifferent arrangements deprived some numbers of a much-needed thrust, and threw an unfair weight onto the singer's shoulders.

After a few more rehearsals this show should get off the ground and into the right sound. It's a case of the right idea needing better execution.

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