

LAST NIGHT was very much "welcome back" night when three top groups returned to their appreciative audiences with presentations that were in each case a little different to when we last heard them.

And, because last night was the Johannesburg debut of Aidan "Dooley" Mason, Rabbitt's new member, there was an air of intense anticipation. Could he do it, would Rabbitt be the same — or better?

Depends what you mean. Musically, their sound is leaning further into American rock. They are getting heavier and, yes, Rabbitt is progressing toward the driving, assertive sound of world-class bands.

Rabbitt's music has improved but, alas, there is a tarnish on their glitter. Is it because they were without the climatic charisma of the final appearance of the evening? Or is the vibe that holds them together not strong

#### POP/ROCK

John Michell

Rabbitt/5 000 Volts

Brian Finch and Kenny Henson

Film Trust Arena

enough to wham the audience?

Perhaps it is an uncertainty, manifest in their music, as they rightly probe forward to a more settled, conclusive sound. Come on, Rabbitt. You're right on, you're right there — so get your magic back.

That top disco group, 5 000 Volts, are back by public demand. Still one of the best, they continue to pound out music that is both wild and refreshing.

They also appear slightly changed. More rock, but with a good balance of disco. Lovely.

Linda Kelly stomps and strides about the stage, in-

voking an immediate and exciting rapport with her audience.

From her pounding "Can't Stop Myself From Loving You" to her poignant Eagles number, "Desperado", she has an energy that makes the Volts worthy of their return invitation.

Brian Finch and Kenny Henson, more into rock blues than their earlier surf-type identification, still produce stormy but beautiful passages. "Gertrude the Groupie" has the makings of a hit single.

Sure, they could be a touch stronger here and there, and the equipment wasn't exactly set for their type of music, but they can rise above all that through their expertise.

Funny-man cum compere Tony Stewart, although popular with a large section of the audience, has improved his Afrikaans but not his jokes. Pity.

**POOR 5000 Volts!** Despite crackling electricity, peals of thunder, a stunning (in more ways than one) vocalist in Lynda Kelly, and super-sessionmen as backing musicians, they could not break that spell of special Durban Rabbitt magic that had been cast 15 minutes before, in the first half.

Volts tried hard to throw the plunger of their worldwide hits — "Dr Kiss Kiss," "Walking on a Love Cloud" — but time and time again they were short-circuited by voices from up back shouting for Rabbitt. A display of bad manners, perhaps, but certainly nothing that should have distured their panache.

Technically, they were brilliant, with former Hawk drummer Ivor Back holding all together in a polished fan of stickwork, and Miss Kelly (who replaced Tina Charles in 5000 Volts) showing she had just as much vitality and power.

But somehow, hanging up there in among the Victorian scrollwork of the ceiling, the spirit of Rabbitt lurked, ready to plunge and devastate.

And if anyone thought Rabbitt, musically, was a dead duck, last night proved conclusively and without a shadow of a doubt that they are not. In fact, last night marked the debut South African performance with the group of Aiden "Dooley" Mason as Rabbitt's number four man.

It also notched up the

Show: 5000 VOLTS (Lynda Kelly, Steve Lauri, Martin Cohen, Mike Nelson); RABBIT (Duncan Faure, Aiden Mason, Ronnie Robot, Neil Cloud); BRIAN FINCH and KENNY HENSON; and TONY STEWART.  
Venue: Durban City Hall.

By OWEN COETZER

birth of Rabbitt, part two.

There have been changes: two sets of keyboards, two lead guitars with Ronnie Robot (bass) dead centre-stage. The arrangement, enabling either Mason or Faure to double or solo on either instrument, is unusual and wise.

The result is a powerhouse of sound not heard from Rabbitt before.

And "Dooley"? Head bobbing, lithe body bending, this SA-born Chinese proved his worth from the first with neat runs and total harmony, sometimes high, sometimes low.

There were some scratchy moments (his rehearsal time with the group since he arrived from Canada last Saturday totalled 14 hours) but these were fractional in the weight of sound and expertise he is able to show.

Faure — beforehand a very much second guitarist to Trevor Rabin — exploded in fast lead work, alternating with Mason, proving he is able to take on the mantle of Rabbitt's leadership with confidence in his ability to wield an

axe. We've never seen him like this before.

Robot, too, was tighter than I have seen him and Neil Cloud among the most hardworking of drummers.

Music, with two exceptions came from their new album with "I Am Aware" the total knockout of the night.

Criticism? Certainly: Rabbitt should now knock off their old music like "Working for the People" It's a by-gone era, man. And concentrate on their new stuff.

Brian Finch and Kenny Henson who opened, have become tighter together, if that is at all possible. Henson's leadwork is still phenomenal as their new song Lonely Spaceman indicates Finch (ovation) and Henson's electric work well together . . . but they must have some of their music on record on the show, like Free and Easy perhaps. It identifies.

There were a few sound problems last night. Rabbitt felt them, as did 5000 Volts who were plagued by feedback somewhere along the line, and the notorious City Hall echo made Lynda Kelly (and Duncan Faure) block one ear to ensure their pitch was correct from time to time.

This triple-bill is not to be missed under any circumstances Oh yes! Only a Sagittarian could tell jokes like comedian-comper Tony Stewart. People actually laughed! And loved him!



THE CRITICS

# Accentuating the positive

HIGH voltage is certainly an apt phrase to describe this outfit as they belt out a hard, driving sound that can be heard right down to the car park.

Formed as a session group in 1975 to record a Tony Evers song, 5 000 Volts has developed into an extremely polished outfit that is neat on the eye but somewhat harsh on the ear.

Still the five members can faithfully produce the disco sounds that scorched the charts here. They get by nicely without resorting to unnecessary gimmicks.

Vocalist Lynda Kelly, a dynamo in her rainbow

coloured dress, and Mike Nelson's exquisite keyboard work spearhead the Volts' attack.

Lynda's voice is a soaring, piercing instrument that has to fly high to keep away from being totally smothered by her backing.

The words to the songs are not that important — and one couldn't hear them either — but what counted was the beat. And the huge

## CONCERT... PETER FELDMAN

SHOW: 5 000 Volts (Film Trust Arena).

crowd got plenty of that.

The show began 25 minutes after the advertised time. Another delay after interval had Volts taking the stage just after 10 pm.

Surely there's a way of

moving the people in more efficiently.

An improving Geoff St John stretched his vocal chords, with some nifty body movements as an accompaniment on "You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine", "I Only Have Eyes For You" and "You're My World."

He is a cool professional who really needs the intimacy of a cabaret room to score well.

Eye-openers, too, were Kenny Henson and Brian Finch, two of South Africa's most perceptive and talented musician-songsmiths.

They opened with Ramsay MacKay's "Orang-Utang", given a fine and lengthy embellishment by Henson's typical guitar wizardry.

"Free 'n Easy", part of the soundtrack from the surfing film "Playgrounds

in Paradise", rolled evenly along, and "The Lonely Spaceman" even had touches of a Bowie-cum-Curtis Muldoon. A great team.

Tony Stewart, no stranger to this sort of show, was the compere-comedian and came out attacking the moment he stepped on stage.

The show has some rough edges, but they will be ironed out.

RADIO

DAILY DISPATCH, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1977

**RABBITT — 5 000 VOLTS SHOW, at the City Hall, East London.**

Raise up your hands, Dooley Mason, raise up your hands and play . . .

East London can be proud of its Rabbitt, the all-round musician who left here for Canada a few years ago, and has now returned to play with the South African group.

He's only been back little over a week, but if last night's performance is anything to go by, Dooley will be a definite asset to the group.

I am not a Rabbitt fan (though most of the not very full hall made it clear they were) but Dooley showed a measure of stage confidence and ex-

perience which survived although the Rabbitt props, lights and equipment had been held up when the truck broke down.

The rest of the group looked decidedly lost except for supremely confident Neil Cloud on borrowed drums.

The audience took a while to liven up, but after a few numbers the space in front of the stage was filled with screaming teenagers, who waved their hands and chanted: "We want Rabbitt" when the group left the stage.

The British group, 5 000 Volts gave a good show, Lynda Kelly's personality and strong voice hindered only by gremlins in the

microphone system. Her version of the Eagles number, Desperado, showed that she does, indeed, have a very good voice.

The blonde lead singer has a way about her on the stage which communicates itself to the audience — she obviously loves doing what she is doing, and she does it well. It is a pity that the power in her voice is not used in more of the group's songs, which tend to be too fast and commercial to allow it full rein.

But for me, the high point of the show came at the beginning, with the South African duo, Brian Finch and Kenny Henson, one of whose songs features in the film Surfing Paradise which is to be

released here soon.

Kenny Henson must be among South Africa's top lead guitarists, with an ability to make his guitar range in sound from organ to light string.

He seems totally oblivious to the audience and concentrates solely on making that guitar sing, and sing it does.

Singer Brian Finch has a powerful and pliable voice, and a depth to it that is missing in many of the more popular singers.

It is such a shame that their sound, like that of Rabbitt and 5 000 Volts was marred by the deafening volume which cuts out vocals and leaves the ears ringing.

— BRIDGET HALLACK

## Snap and crackle pop

THE curtain goes up to the roar of a jet engine, and there they are: a young band with young music and a wildly entertaining show of slick, professional music.

Their programme is perfectly harmonised with the beat and sound which has become Volts' trademark, running through an hour of non-stop rhythm. But most of all they are alive.

Much of the credit goes to Lynda Kelly, blonde wizz-girl who stomps and parades around the stage as she bellows, croons and cries out the hits which have been churned out by the group.

There are super numbers like "Can't stop myself from loving you" from

**POP**  
John Michell  
5000 Volts  
Film Trust Arena

their new album, and "Desperados" the Eagles' big hit, "Walking on a love cloud" and "I'm on fire" two of the Volts' really hot songs, come across with a potent larger-than-life-sound that gave last night's audience everything they came for.

The show is visually exciting with an elaborate and effective backdrop towering above the performers, while Lynda Kelly gets audience's willing help by clapping out the rhythm. And the rest of the group fits the overall scene perfectly.

But all these visuals would be pointless without tip-top performances, and 5000 Volts give flaw-

less presentations. Thanks here to Mike Nelson on keyboards who arranges their music.

His remarkable talent sets off the assets of the other members to make the show — pardon the expression — electrifying.

All of them are good: Kevin Wells is a fine drummer, guitarists Martin Cohen and Steve Lauri are backed by excellent playing and experience with the latter flinging out some hot-shot vocals.

The supporting programme is almost as good. The Basemen open the show with instrumental numbers that are competent and professional, and they provide a strong backing to Geoff St John.

This gentleman has improved his stage presentation considerably since last I saw him several months ago. A bit nervy, but he sings well.

His vocals are em-

bellished by Glenda, Lee and Ingrid, from the all-girl band Clout. Good sounds here, if a little drowned by the band.

Briar, Finch and Ken Henson are two young men with a style which is difficult to describe. Somewhere between folk and blue grass? That, with electric guitar reminiscent of Hendrix complementing acoustic guitar.

Their music is individual and very good — they obviously have a rocketing career ahead of them — although now that they have perfected their technique they could relax into a little more feeling.

The show is compered by TV funny-man Tony Stewart. And he really is funny, with some wonderful lines. Pity about the old syndrome of trying to charm an audience with phoney Afrikaans. Apart from that, he adds to an enjoyable evening of high-quality entertainment.