TOUGH NEW SOUND

PREVIEW

LADYTRON
SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

TOUR MANIACS: Ladytron

AFTER A LOW-KEY BEGINNING, FORMER LO-FI OUTSIDERS LADYTRON HAVE CLAWED THEIR WAY UP AND DOMINATED THE ELECTRO-POP SCENE FOR THE BEST PART OF A DECADE. **HELEN CLARKE** CAUGHT UP WITH SINGER MIRA AROYO AHEAD OF THEIR SHOW AT SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

LADYTRON'S 2001 debut, *604*, is one of the forgotten gems of the early noughties. At a time when garage rock was making its breakthrough, their Kraftwerk-inspired sparseness stood out from the rest.

A rough diamond, its hollowness was its charm, and the whispered, robotic vocals, shared by Helen Marnie and Mira Aroyo, gave it an eerie edge, unexplored in modern electro.

"When we first started out, there weren't that many indie bands using synths to write songs," says Aroyo.

"Whereas now almost every band has a synth. I think pop music is a lot more diverse than when we first started."

Which might explain the sudden departure from their tried and tested formula.

Their second album *Light and Magic* spawned minor hits *Seventeen* and *Evil*, but it was 2005's *Witching Hour* that signaled their transition into the mainstream.

"It wasn't conscious. We are not the kind of people who are satisfied by finding a formula and repeating ourselves, so every album we have tried to write new and better material than the one before. Also we have learned a bit along the way and played live a lot, which we hadn't really done until after *Light and Magic* was released.

"That was probably the main influence on our sound and as a result *Witching Hour* and [new album] *Velocifero* sound tougher and fuller than the previous albums."

Bulgarian Aroyo teamed up with Liverpool-based DJs Reuben Wu and Daniel Hunt in summer 1999.

Shortly after, Glaswegian Helen Marnie was recruited, they stole the title of a Roxy Music track as their new band's name, and got to work on *204*.

Their fourth album, *Velocifero*, was released earlier this year, and Aroyo seems to have found her USP within the vocal duo. Two tracks – *Black Cat* and *Kletva* – are sung in her native tongue, to devastating effect.

Emotionless, blank vocals recited over thundering drums and blistering, gothic synths make the former one of the best album openers for years.

But Aroyo refuses to become complacent. "We'd like to get recording a new album as soon as possible. We just need to get a break from touring.

"We've been touring pretty much none stop. We were in the USA and Canada for a couple of months, then we did festivals in the summer, then we went to Australia and played there. Now we're in Europe..."

London is the next stop on their worldwide tour, so what can we expect from the show?

"Pyrotechnics and dry ice! Helen and I are going to be shot out of a cannon ball. Lions will be jumping through fire hoops..." she jokes.

"I wish! In reality? A nice, light show and some more songs from *Velocifero* that we haven't played before. And some very old songs too..."

● Ladytron play Shepherd's Bush Empire on November 21. For more information call 020 8743 5384

MUSIC, SPEECH AND STUNNING VISUALS ON OFFER

Debate

THE FRONTLINE Club – London's best kept secret – has such a good programme it's hard to chose a highlight.

Amid their latest season of films, photography and talks which tackle HIV and AIDS, is a cheeky night with Jon Ronson.

Known to many from his former *Out of the Ordinary* column in the *Saturday Guardian*, he will discuss his latest book, which asks silly yet serious questions such as 'why are Iraqi prisoners forced to repeatedly listen to *Barney the Purple Dinosaur*'s theme tune?' Be prepared for some tough topics, sensibly handled by BBC Radio 4's Peter Curran who will chair the discussion.

And if you're feeling the crunch, just drop in online for a free webcast.

● Insight with Jon Ronson: The Men Who Stare at Goats and Other Stories is at The Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, Paddington, on Friday, November 14 at 7pm. £10 or free webcast. Call 020 7479 8950. See www.frontlineclub.com

A LOT ON HIS MIND: Jon Ronson

Picture submitted

Audio-visual

STUNNING: Onedotzero

Picture submitted

WANT to see how far audio-visual technology has come? Look no further than *Onedotzero: adventures in moving image*.

The multi-media showcase has run for 10 years at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

It's brought talents such as directors Chris Cunningham (music videos for Bjork and Aphex Twin); and Spike Jones (*Being John Malkovich;* plus Fatboy Slim music videos) to the fore.

Now housed at the British Film Institute and the IMAX, expect even more.

Nitin Sawhney, Hexstatic and D-Fuse are among the better-known names, but try to pay attention to the little ones – they won't be little for long!

● *Onedotzero* is at the BFI Southbank and BFI IMAX from Friday until Sunday, November 14-16. Call 020 7928 3232 or 0870 787 2525. See www.onedotzero.com/programme08 for full listings

Journey round the best of the arts with **Christian McLaughlin**

Jazz

Picture submitted

HERBIE Hancock, Portico Quartet and other hot tickets are already sold out. But don't give up on the London Jazz Festival – iit's bigger than you can imagine. Taking place at dozens of venues from Dalston to Richmond, check out the website for full listings. Our tip is Femi Kuti, the sax and trumpet playing son of the Afrobeat guru Fela Kuti, supported by the soulful afro-gypsy sounds of Paris-based songwriter Ayo (*pictured*).

● Femi and The Positive Force with support from Ayo is at the Royal Festival Hall on Friday, November 14 at 7.30pm. £10-25. Call 08716 632 505. See www.southbankcentre.co.uk or www.londonjazzfestival.org.uk

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