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21ST CENTURY BLUES

Ruta Maya, June 6

It looks like the blues at millennium's turn will infuse lots of jazz and rock. Despite the name, 21st Century Blues are very much a Big Brother and the Holding Co. (or any SF band circa 1967) redux pared down. Up front, there's a big, big-voiced, big-souled, big

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stage-presented woman (more like Ma than Janis, really) with a penchant for outfits with an abundance of fabric about the arms. (She said she'd just flown in from Seattle. No doubt, lass.) On the sides, giving the soulstress her foundation, are a chunky, flaming red, hollow-body guitar played by an Abe Lincoln impersonator, and keys with a sound big enough to swallow the whole block if it so chose. Luckily, they laid back in the mix this night. Spaghetti Warehouse was spared. The hour-plus set was a maneuver in retrovogue, albeit really good retrovogue. With one chord, Summer of Psychic Meltdown Austin became Summer of Love SF. But 21stCB aren't sans the seeds of originality. How many bands scat nowadays or sing Camus to jazz? When looking at all the other retroesque choices in the world - like the plague of Deadheads happily living on fratboy cash - these cats are eight miles high. I was groovin'..... - Joe Mitchell

Fender when needed, and generally being the legend he's quickly becoming. It's good to be king.

- Raoul Hernandez

PAM PELTZ

Ruta Maya, April 28

This was not the easy stroll down memory lane I was expecting. It was more a mad dash through a dark alley abutted by crackhouses and sanitariums. A mere 16 people showed up for this gig, but what Peltz delivered was far more and far better than any of the gaggle could have expected. Back in the mid-Eighties, Peltz fronted a locally venerated group of ethereal folkies known as Minus Grace. But rather than bank on this known quantity, Peltz is now on a path more akin to quirkmeisters Vic Chesnutt and Victoria Williams than Peter, Paul, and Mary bred with the Cocteau Twins. In content, she is a first cousin of Daniel Johnston, ranting about satanists, millionaires, and messiahs among other things. But ranting and meditations on the weird have never been so appealing. Peltz's voice is stronger and more haunting than memory serves, and her guitar riffs are impeccable. A song about religious conversion was still bouncing about my head

three days post-gig. It's obvious that this Austinite hasn't missed a stride over the last 10 years despite not getting the notoriety her talent warrants. I guess real artists just don't care about such trifles.

- Joe Mitchell

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