

LUCY LEAVE / SELF HELP / MANU LOUIS / BEARD OF DESTINY

The Wheatsheaf

Blues rock duo Beard of Destiny are at half strength for tonight's Gappy Tooth Industries show, so it's just Graham Barlow playing acoustic – a one-man blues machine as he puts himself in song. Despite this he's far more fun than 90% of solo acoustic performers we've seen lately, mixing up growly Mississippi blues with daft humour, playing 'Ace of Spades' Robert Johnson style one minute, singing about cats eating budgies the next and culminating in a clap-along number titled 'The Ghost of Larry Grayson Perry'.

Berlin's Manu Louis is alone onstage too, dressed like an extra from *Miami Vice* and accompanied by an array of electronic gadgetry from which he conjures a slightly manic set of highly kitsch electro-pop that variously sounds like a *Generation Game* take on DAF; a Latino cruise ship crooner with an abstract industrial electronica

fetish; a *Mighty Boosh* skit on cbm; a failed disco star having a breakdown and accidentally making the best music of his career, and a holiday camp kids entertainer who's thought "fuck it, these brats need some Krautrock in their lives." Sometimes it's silly, often it's camp, but mostly it's inspired and highly entertaining.

Self Help are also a (wo)man down tonight, which steals some of the detail from their barrelling pop-punk that's ferocious yet merry, the songs bold and fresh and executed with a rough-edged naivety. They're being tipped as one of the new local bands most-likely-to, and while we don't want to burden them with the weight of expectation, they have the raucous vibe of early Supergrass about them and, crucially, the tunes to back it up. Welcome to your new favourite band.

"That was *Nightshift*'s fourteenth favourite song

of this year," announces Lucy Leave's Mike Smith after playing of 'Chant//Fresh Crepes'; "before that was *Nightshift*'s ninth favourite song of last year, so you can see the trajectory we're on," he deadpans. Truth is Lucy Leave are very much on an upward trajectory. And a downward one. And a leftward one. They're a band who probably struggle to second guess themselves, their set coming on like a minibusload of tunes taken for a trip to a hall of magic mirrors and returned home in their distorted state. '40 Years' is as close as they get to a straight musical line – a pummelling Bo Diddley/Modern Lovers jam-out, but the likes of 'Beauty of the World' and 'Speak Danish to Me' are as fractured, cracked, bent out of shape and inventive as you'd hope from a band who tend to sound like Deerhoof, Soft Machine, The Cardiacs, The Slits and David Bowie all at the same time. A band perfectly suited to Gappy Tooth Industries' square pegs, round holes and what the hell ethos. They're a band on their very own trajectory; the rest of us can simply try and keep track.

Dale Kuttack