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Photo: Nathan Hecht

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Maria in the Shower & the Burnettes with Carolyn Mark and her very best friends

At the Biltmore Cabaret, January 25th, 2011



Photo: Maria in the Shower, by Darren Borrowman

Open-mindedness is a vital quality for any adventure-seeker pursuing new and exciting music in this city. Open-mindedness led to a hit-and-miss at the Biltmore this past Tuesday.

Hit? Maria in the Shower. Miss? The Burnettes, joined by Carolyn Mark and company.

Known, as a duo, for their stellar bass-climbing acrobatics and jovial musical prowess while busking in the Granville Island Public Market, Maria in the

Shower are far more than twice as good when the full band gets together onstage. They are a local foursome of pinstripe-vested, bowler hat-clad young men, difficult to pigeonhole into any genre. On the Biltmore stage they proclaimed their style “metaphysical bluegrass taking liberties with biblical shit.” Close enough.

While more commonly known for their vaudeville-esque, cabaret/gypsy-style sounds, the band’s infectious persona trumped any questions about musical genre, and they had the crowd moving their feet to the beat with good old-fashioned awesome tunes. With trumpet, trombone, accordion, guitar, upright bass and a full drum-kit shuffling amongst the fellows for the entirety of the upbeat 45-minute set, the band had the densely packed floor at the Biltmore dancing through nearly every song.

Sadly, Maria in the Shower had to make way for the main event, the Burnettes, who were hosting the evening to release their fourth studio album, *A Boy & A Girl*. The Burnettes’ twangy, poetic ramblings soon transformed the atmosphere into that of a subdued living-room sing-a-long, to which mainly their friends were invited.

Living-room parties can be great, but you expect more oomph at the Biltmore; the few outsiders in the crowd looked a little bit bored after the duo and their friends (Carolyn Mark, Geoff Berner and a few others joined in for the majority of the set) strummed and plucked through the set’s first three songs, which all sounded mostly the same.

The Burnettes weren’t terrible, but they weren’t Maria either.

The crowd waned noticeably as the set trudged on, maybe because it was late on a Tuesday, and maybe because the audience felt out of place. Most likely, it was just because The Burnettes didn’t have the stage presence, the versatility or the musical vigour that just really makes you happy to be there. They were just there.

If they are simply staying true to their roots, then that is fine.

And hopefully, for the rest of us, the next musical adventure will lead to more Marias and fewer living-room parties.

Get on the bandwagon: Maria in the Shower play *“A Depression Era Dance Party”* at the Waldorf on February 13th, and you should probably go.



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Laurel Borrowman



On lepers, "anarchists," and the 2010 Olympics

At 11:00 on February 20 the Canadian men’s Olympic hockey team would face Team U.S.A. in a do-or-die, winner-take-all bout for Olympic gold. For Olympics organizers the Canadian men’s gold-medal game was the denouement of years of effort. The money had been spent, and the disasters (a...

Will Richter



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Another one bites the dust—another apple-cheeked indie band mounts the podium, eyes reflecting back 200 eager pairs of earnest fans’ eyes—and is mauled, cotton-balled into anonymity, by the Media Club’s soupy mess of a sound system. Mamak Khadem warmed the PA before the Thermals, and...

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It was Friday evening, and as Vancouver emptied for weekend R&R, 20 soldiers clad in combat fatigues, C7 rifles in hand, waited for the bus outside the old

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