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New Music West 2008 - Day Two

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Maria in the Shower

The Penthouse - 8pm

Jesus Murphy I don't know what to say about the set I witnessed by this band tonight, so here's a few run-on sentences where I attempt to fill you in on what went down at The Penthouse club by Vancouver locals, Maria in the Shower. First off everyone was greeted at the door by lead singer Jack Garton, dressed up in all-black ringmaster clothes and full black and white make-up like Eric Draven from The Crow, who was all the while playing an accordion. Then, once the crowd was more or less seated, Garton walked through the room (still playing) and up onto the stage where he was joined by his three bandmates Martin Reisle, Brendon Hartley, and Todd Biffard - all of which were also dressed like the mimes from hell. Meanwhile, the side of the stage filled up with a group of eight people with broom handles, dressed like they'd just gotten off a shift in a mine. What followed was one of the most amazing and innovative shows I've ever seen performed by a small and virtually unknown band. A beautiful blend of American roots-rock with flourishes of Garton's trumpet, accordion, and stellar guitar playing by Reisle that would

be right at home on some of the earliest Sun recordings. I could write a huge article about this band (and I likely will at some point), however I will take what little wakefulness I still have and write a bit about the closing number "Train of Pounding Hours". This amazing track which can also be heard on their website, featured unorthodox percussion by Biffard that involved the clanking of hammer on rail, and the repetitive dropping of heavy chain in a bucket at which point the "miners" came to life and threw down one of the coolest dance routines of all time. Kind of like Cirque du Soleil mixed with an old song-and-dance musical, but if you took out the professional dancers and contortionists and put in everyday workers instead. Wonderful music, an incredible stage presence by all members of the band; not just Garton, who is himself an expressive showman along the same line as (dare I say it?) Freddy Mercury himself. All of this combined make Maria in the Shower one of the bands to watch. It's not an exaggeration to say that this band is completely amazing and is exactly the kind of vibrant expression of art that this city so badly needs right now. Let's hope they're around for the long haul.