

THE BIG DISH Soho Marquee

IF ALL you needed to infiltrate the Top 40 was a ridiculous name, Scotland's The Big Dish (inspired by a bowl of soup) would be as hard to dislodge as Prefab Sprout, Wet Wet Wet and Aztec Camera.

Unfortunately, as Dish mainman Stephen Lindsay has learned in the course of their four year Virgin career, the equation has been refined to: great songs plus no airplay equals goodnight Vienna.

Witness the sad disintegration of Microdisney.

At the Marquee, the new Big Dish line-up were fairly smashing. They paid special attention to their new single, 'European Rain', a jaunty, hummable excursion which we may as well admit sounds a bit like Danny Wilson's 'Mary's Prayer', since Bruno Brookes will think he's a genius when he spots it.

But they also favoured a few vintage numbers, notably their 1985 single, 'Prospect Street', which they played not in a rueful here's-one-you-missed way, but more with a fond nod to nostalgia.

Lindsay's strength as a

songwriter is in his juggling of thoughtful lyrics (about childhood, jobs, families) and catchy choruses, to the detriment of neither. He is as classy as Frame and McAloon in the genesis of his songs, and a good deal better than both in the execution of them.

The most affecting song of the night was 'Burn', from the imminent 'Creeping Up On Jesus' album. In its gentle, aching slide-guitar refrain and solemn, uplifting lyric could be heard snatches of new pop champions.

Pop songs — good ones — have always been about

making your three minute matter, rather than looking to see what everyone else is up to and then doing exactly the same. The Big Dish matter, again and again and again.

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