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Black Mountain @ Beck's Music Box

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Gig Reviews by Rock Princess, 4th March, 2009



Circumnavigating the temporary barriers blocking out the voyeurs the Beck's Music Box is a focal point on the otherwise mundane Perth Esplanade. With the garish inner spokes of the newly assembled ferris wheel as the brightest object in the southern sky an about face to the venue sees the shadowy buildings, the symbols of business, as a foreign frame to the hub of creativity beneath the tented stage.

Walking through the white marquee, sweet incense enfolds the congregation. Ascending to a raised platform the sofas of the festival are abundant but all have been hurriedly reserved. There is no grass beneath the feet on the lower level instead boards have been laid to safeguard the precious watered lawn. With tiered seating scaling 10 levels ample room has all in a positive mood.

An announcement from back stage takes the awaiting audience by surprise. The promise of an after party open to the public with a performance by local band **Tame Impala** is a pleasing result for the interruption to first and second drinks.

With a brief welcome to the festival, Canadians **Black Mountain** arrive.

Commencing with big meaty riffs *Stormy High* all but sweeps the audience off their feet with an avalanche of sound. The thumping bass was so heavy that it reverberated through the floor and resonated in the thighs of the crowd, spurring a spontaneous foot stomp.

Angels was a sombre follow up but added to the quick realisation that this band has versatility beyond a genre label. Indicative of the folk origins of psychedelic and progressive rock music the breathy voices of lead guitarist and singer **Stephen McBean** and **Amber Webber** are abstract and yet grounded in natural and primitive expressions of the soul.

In *Wucan* the contrast of these two vocalists from McBean's dulcet drones to Webber's wailing vocal technique were enmeshed with the unified and well woven sounds of the band where every instrument has its place.

With this as their first tour to Australia, a chatty **Joshua Wells** on drums asked, "So what is this area used for normally, ducks? " Agreement and other lurid suggestions came from the audience at the front of stage.

Basked in blue red and purple lights *Don't run our hearts around* was a backtrack into the material of self titled first LP as smoke danced across the stage.

The stiff bodied audience got a jolt when Wells enthused, "party like it's Sunday night" and then crashed into massive a massive drums solo with a cataclysmic organ eeriness played by **Jeremy Schmidt** for *Evil Ways* .

Stay Free presented as a ballad next to the immense build up; then a hasty retreat within *Tyrants* that finished with Wells and Schmidt playing with effects dials.

Returning for an encore that took the already 8 minute recorded *Bright Lights* to epic length and proportions, followed by modest thanks to the receptive and fair sized crowd for a band so far from home.

Standing in an audience where everyone's a critic or reviewer is never truer than at PIAF. And with the intention to impress with Canadians Black Mountain PIAF deliver another outstanding act.