

**THE LILAC TIME**  
LONDON FULHAM  
GREYHOUND

PERFORMING IN a *City Limits* rock week proclaimed as "the ultimate in aural sects" should be enough to put anyone off a group. But this is the return of Stephen 'Tin Tin' Duffy, always one of the more-clued up members of the early '80s pop elite, and The Lilac Time have received enough good press to ensure a packed house.

Not a conspicuous start. The mix is muddier than The Baseball Ground in January and the group elect to start with their best song, rarely a good move, especially when it's a ballad. 'Black Velvet' is special, it has a frailty which runs through most Lilac songs but is possessed of a beauty lacking in the rest of the set.

Polite, polite, polite, The Lilac Time get into a groove of competent, semi-acoustic pop which is pleasant but hardly enthralling. A few words of communication between songs could have prevented them from becoming mere background muzak but none were forthcoming. Those who came along expecting the much touted "new Simon and Garfunkel" were sorely disappointed.

Occasionally reminiscent of Madness or The Housemartins in lesser moments, The Lilac Time are lightweight, sticky pop which could find a sizeable early-teen market just waiting for it to happen. All Stephen Duffy needs to do is change his name to Tin Tin and they've got it made.

**Bob Stanley**