

**STEPHEN DUFFY**  
**MARK KOZELEK**  
**PARIS PASSAGE DU**  
**NORD-OUEST**

BACKSTAGE, MARK Kozelek (better known as the singer out of Red House Painters) is having one of his turns. "They hated me! That was the worst... I'm never doing that again! Forget London... forget it!" Tonight is Kozelek's first date of his brief solo acoustic tour and despite being a memorably tuneless experience (like an audience with Neil Young's idiot half-brother in a dungeon), the set is immortalised by a heckler who barks, "No wonder your girlfriend left you!" mid-set.

Comfortingly, his fans manage to persuade him to return for an encore, at which point he starts mumbling incoherently about how the people reading a magazine at the front of the stage must really have a downer on him... Inexplicably, no-one responds by crying, "F— off back to your bedroom, you sad man." But you can't have everything.

Enter the unfeasibly skinny Stephen Duffy, who wryly promises the 200-strong audience "three hours of songs about suicide". Since splitting The Lilac Time two years ago, Duffy has kept himself busy, investing all his efforts into the consumption of vast quantities of mescaline with his mate Nige Kennedy and trailing around the country in support of Aston Villa.

Tonight, however, he's back on the tracks. The staple diet is characteristically Duffy – all delicate acoustics and lovelorn lyrics – invigorated by the addition of cello and violin. A mix'n'match collection of Lilac Time stuff and new material peaks with the nostalgic 'Holte End' (an 'Everyday Is Like Sunday' for footy fans) and waspish single 'Natalie'.

Significantly, he appears to be enjoying himself: gone is that vaguely aloof persona that made you want to slap him. Picture Brett Anderson with a sense of humour or a more coherent Evan Dando – the man is obviously at the peak of his game.

But is it all too late? Is his rock epitaph destined to immortalise him as Stephen Duff Duff Tinny, the bloke who was in Duran Duran for a fortnight? In our eagerness to explode with enthusiasm over the 'new' generation of British beat poets and kooky American slackers, on tonight's evidence, we may have let one of the greats slip through the net.

**Iestyn George**