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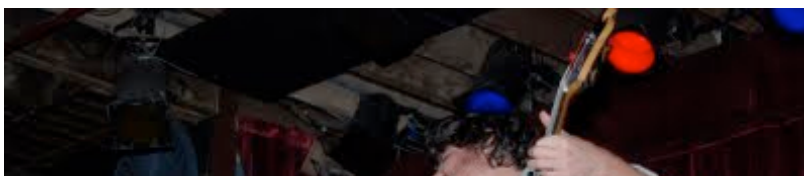
October 26, 2009

Live Review: Motel Motel at CMJ



The Bell House // Brooklyn, NY // Oct. 23, 2009

It was a short hop to the Bell House in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn for hometown five-piece Motel Motel, who are currently enjoying a stint near the top of New York's new music radar. Branded by shimmering notes and meticulous vocal harmonies over an eclectic, Americana-esque backdrop, Motel Motel's set for CMJ's Polyvinyl Records showcase provided a nice overview of the band during their expansive six-song set.



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While Motel Motel's opener started quietly, their set kicked quickly into gear. As the song progressed and the audience crept closer in towards the stage, lead singer Eric Engel harnessed the room's energy, fusing it into his vocal lines and movements on stage. The placid atmosphere of the venue was broken once Engel took charge, viewers captivated by the vocalist on his tip-toes, his neck seeming to Gumby-twist around the microphone as he sang. Guitarist/bassist Timo Sullivan nurtured the on-stage chemistry with a delightful back-and-forth between he and Engel over the guitar twinkle and pedal steel pushing the song forward.



Despite encountering a few technical issues, and performing on a stage that in a few instances seemed hard for the band to fill with their lo-fi, indie groove, Motel Motel's playful, well-constructed compositions showed strength. The minimalism of the songs pushed through without seeming sparse and shining, plucked notes and subdued drums provided a frame for viewing the contrast between Engel's curious, sometimes slurred vocals and the meticulous harmonies members Erik Gundel and Mickey Theis added. The band's fifth song showcased the three-part vocals best and proved to be the most memorable moment of the night.

Motel Motel closed with not only a strong track, but with all the energy they'd been thriving on all night. Drummer Jeremy Duvall

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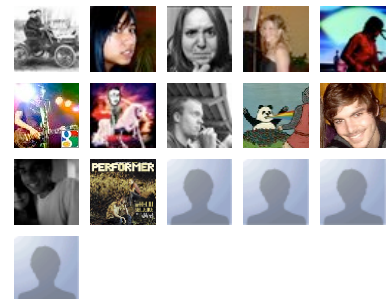
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lifted himself out of the background, rhythms romancing with the melodies from Gundel's keyboard – everything coming together. The entire set demonstrated range, while still feeling cohesive through the overarching palette and rhythms. It was a decidedly solid showing from Motel Motel, who even while displaying immense maturity, still allowed hints of youthful, Brooklyn energy to kick through. They've created a niche that's markedly theirs.

-Review and photos by Meredith Turits

www.myspace.com/motelmotel

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