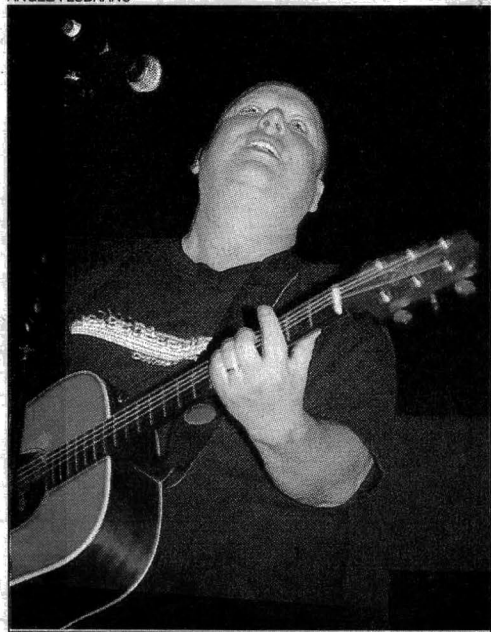




ANGELA LUBRANO



Pop Pixies

Brixton Academy

★★★★★

David Sinclair

PIXIES had long since left the stage after a three-song encore. The house lights were on. The drum kit was covered over with a black sheet and there was soothing music playing on the PA. And still the audience stood shouting for more. They didn't get it, of course. For if ever a group adhered to the maxim of "Treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen" it is Pixies.

Playing their first gig on British soil since they split up in 1993, the band from Boston put on a show that was not only musically spellbinding but exe-

cuted with a ruthless display of self-contained authority. Barely a word was spoken to the audience from start to finish. And there was little in the way of grandstanding heroics.

True, there was the sequence during *Vamos*, where Joey Santiago carefully placed his shrieking guitar on a stand and then thwacked the strings with a drum stick thrown to him by drummer David Lovering. But no one could accuse the singer and guitarist Frank Black or singer and bass player Kim Deal of overegging the pudding when it came to their stage presentation.

Both dressed in black and built more like a pair of oxen than pixies, they performed with little ostensible reference to each other and no unnecessary movement or sentiment of any kind.

So what did the four musicians do to make this show so special? Simple.

They played a set of superlative rock songs with unwavering conviction, and they did it brilliantly. They began, perversely, with their version of Neil Young's *Winterlong*, the gentlest song of the set. Black strummed an acoustic guitar and sang in sweet harmony with Deal. Next moment they were into the jaunty, punk-rock strut of *Nimrod's Son*, followed by the equally infectious and tuneful *Holiday Song*.

They hammered through 25 numbers or more in little more than an hour and a quarter, each of them offering a fresh twist on a guitar-group formula that has shaped the musical landscape.

Indeed it sounded so fresh and immediate that you would hardly have thought this was a

greatest-hits set by a band resurrected from the 1980s. Black's macabre lyrics to songs such as *Gouge Away* and *Debaucher*, sung in a voice that could turn in an instant from a college kid's whine to a blood-curdling shriek, were echoed by the voices of a crowd most of whom were plainly too young to have seen the band first time around.

The group may have returned primarily to earn some cash. But a few more performances like this and they will be able to walk away with the Crown Jewels.

**Black magic:
Pixies
frontman
Frank Black
shines at the
Brixton
Academy**