

Vetiver and Crystal Stilts

Le Poisson Rouge

Grounded in the '60s, Revisiting Slivers of Rock's Past

The bill at Le Poisson Rouge on Wednesday was a night of indie-rock period pieces, as Vetiver and Crystal Stilts revisited specific slices of rock's past. Vetiver,

**JON
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**MUSIC
REVIEW**

the band led by the songwriter Andy Cabic, ambled through its set, taking its time in songs about wanderings, absences and longings.

While the lyrics are often downhearted and bereft, Mr. Cabic sings them in a gentle, deadpan tenor, sounding matter-of-fact about his estrangement in songs like "On the Other Side," from Vetiver's next album, to be released early next year.

Mr. Cabic has worked in various groups with the songwriter Devendra Banhart, but their tastes have diverged. As Mr. Banhart has been drawn to Brazilian tropicalia and other Latin pop, Mr. Cabic has planted his songwriting firmly in the Americana of country and blues. And when

Vetiver lingered over the songs on Wednesday, its music drifted toward unmistakable echoes of the Grateful Dead: the shuffles, the fingerpicking, the dazed blues licks, the glimmering counterpoint.

As in a Grateful Dead set, the band took its time. Audience members chatted as the band gradually worked its way toward more upbeat songs like "Luna Sea" (with observations like "Darkness might never come to end/Deathly light marks the scene of the crime") and the wry trucker's adventure "Blue Driver," which appears on Vetiver's 2008 album of other people's songs, "Thing of the Past" (Gnomesong), and which had Mr. Cabic offering a rare smile. He delivered his own songs too modestly. They have a despondent integrity that deserves less reticence and more enterprising arrangements.

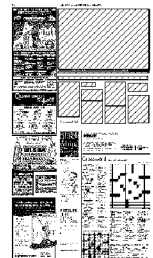
While Vetiver stayed grounded in the 1960s, Crystal Stilts, the

Brooklyn band that shared the bill, aimed for an era-spanning hybrid: three parts Joy Division's postpunk, one part mid-'60s garage-psychelia. The shared components are repetitive riffs, short melody lines, raw-sounding instruments and a haze of reverb that leaves guitar distortion and organ tones hanging in the air, ready to collide with the next chord.

The differences are in nuances like the drumming — Crystal Stilts favors the deliberately mechanical postpunk beat — and the chord progressions, which have a touch of '60s rock.

Each song was a three-minute slab of unswerving beat and undifferentiated sound, trying to revive the darkly obsessive aura of postpunk. But there's a flaw: The singer Brad Hargett lacks the dire charisma of Joy Division's Ian Curtis, making the songs sound more like exercises than exorcisms.

Two bands deliver repetitive riffs and short melody lines.





JULIE/A CERVANTES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Vetiver, led by the songwriter Andy Cabic, took its time in songs about absences and longings at Le Poisson Rouge on Wednesday.