

Live Last Night: Mi Ami



During its turbulent three year existence, D.C.'s Black Eyes evolved into one of the city's most inventive and explosive bands; twisted, pummeling rhythms and a scabrous attitude that was a little like a musical version of getting your face clawed. By the group's 2004 dissolution, it seemed to be pursuing a number of directions, including dub and free jazz.

(Read the rest of the review after the jump.)

Two Black Eyes -- Daniel Martin-McCormick and Jacob Long -- suggest one version of where their former band might have headed with their new trio, Mi Ami. The San Francisco-based outfit (rounded out by whipcrack drummer Damon Palermo) played a blistering set at the Velvet Lounge last night (well, this morning, it is the Velvet, after all) that was thrilling, but offered only brief glimpses at the trio's stylistic range.

On a series of engaging 12" singles and a fascinating debut LP ("Watersports," released last month), Mi Ami stretches out and languishes in punk-dub, sideways-jazz and African accents. On stage, however, Long (bass) and Martin-McCormick (guitar, vocals) stuck to more direct strategy: attack. That mostly meant McCormick riding Long's gut-punch Rickenbacker bass riffs and Palermo's kinetic drum patterns like a banshee, spraying the songs with convulsive echo-guitar riffs.

New material drove the 40-minute performance. Whether crackling wails like "New Guitar" or strung-out nerve battles like "Pressure," the trio gouged their compositions for every ounce of forward motion, flashing back at times to the trebly stab of the Pop Group. And the visual scene at set's end -- members of the crowd and support act Food For Animals on stage banging away at Palermo's kit -- was not only reminiscent of a Black Eyes gig, it indicated Mi Ami already has the live charisma to match the potential of their distinctive recordings.

-- PATRICK FOSTER