

Super'Tramps

David Boothroyd Melody Maker November 19, 1977

Any band that plays 114 concerts on a tour of America and Europe spanning several months deserve full marks for endurance, if nothing else.

That Supertramp managed to give their audience at Bournemouth last week and example of their best at this, the last gig, speaks volumes - for the band themselves, the road crew and everybody else involved.

Supertramp have by now reached a stage of technical perfection that few bands ever approach.

Their sound system, which they own themselves, makes most others sound like a transistor radio.

The lighting is timed to micro-seconds and they play their music faultlessly.

Last week they even installed a private generator in case of power cuts, after suffering that way the week before at Wembley.

But at Bournemouth it was far from a purely technical masterpiece. There were monkeys dancing with bananas(!), schoolgirl Joan attacking sax-player John Helliwell ("a dream come true," he said), and a male stripper sitting beneath the parasol from the cover of "Crisis What Crisis?"

It was a night of restrained lunacy, which the audience loved, but the stage antics were never allowed to distract attention from the music. The band played many of the songs from their 1977 album, "Even In the Quietest Moments," including "Babajji," their latest single, as well as older material, ending up as they always do with "Fool's Overture" and "Crime of the Century," still apparently the favourite of most audiences, and certainly Bournemouth's.

Supertramp's set is not the most spontaneous you will ever see. They stick to one encore, "Crime of the Century," ending in an explosion of noise with the famous album cover of the fists gripping the iron grill filling the screen.

But if they changed the set all the time they couldn't achieve the split-second timing and precision that makes their concerts literally breathtaking. Nobody at Bournemouth seemed to think it sounded over-rehearsed or artificial, just fine music played to perfection.

If you missed them this time around, you missed something special. The band will be back in 1978; don't make the same mistake again.