



REVIEW

Wringing out the music

By **Sylvia Arthur**

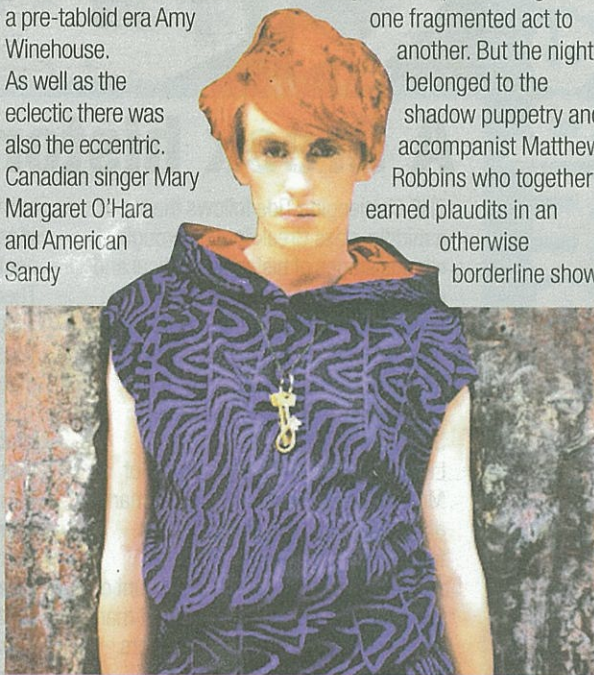
Twisted Christmas, Barbican Hall, 11 December

JARVIS Cocker was the headliner at the Barbican's alternative yuletide celebration, but unfortunately for the audience, who waited all night to see him, the former Pulp frontman wasn't the highlight. After two and a half hours of a bewildering mix of music, comedy and shadow puppetry – some of which worked, some of which didn't – Jarvis sloped on stage to perform two brief and forgettable songs. Luckily, there were other revelations to enjoy. Illinois-based singer-songwriter Daniel Knox was one of them. His deep melancholic vocals called to mind cold winter nights in front of the fire and were perfect for his heart-warming rendition of the classic, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas. Blues-folk duo The Smoke Fairies were ubiquitous

on stage, and proved to be even better on their own than when performing back up for the other acts. Patrick Wolf, a piano playing ex-chorister turned art-rocker, was sensational while unbilled songstress Camille O'Sullivan was reminiscent of a pre-tabloid era Amy Winehouse. As well as the eclectic there was also the eccentric. Canadian singer Mary Margaret O'Hara and American Sandy

Dillon provided much needed light relief, though it wasn't entirely clear whether this was intentional.

What was intentional, however, was the wry comedy of Radio 4 presenter Jeremy Hardy, who ably steered proceedings from one fragmented act to another. But the night belonged to the shadow puppetry and accompanist Matthew Robbins who together earned plaudits in an otherwise borderline show.



Headliner Jarvis Cocker (top) and Patrick Wolf (above)