

*This review was written for Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films, a 2014 multimedia series celebrating the film work of Andy Warhol. <http://www.warhol.org/responsive/event.aspx?id=23314>*

On Friday night, the Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland hosted the world premier of Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol films in honor of the Warhol Museum's 20th Anniversary. Dean Wareham, singer and guitarist of 80's indie greats Galaxie 500, curated the concert, consisting of five musicians (some with backing bands) playing composed music over film shorts shot by Andy Warhol projected onto the stage. The cast of musicians is impressive: along with Wareham, Tom Verlaine and Martin Rev of the legendary art-punk bands Television and Suicide, Deerhunter's Bradford Cox and Eleanor Friedberger of the Fiery Furnaces form an ensemble musical cast spanning almost the whole lifetime of alternative music.

Following a brief introduction from Wareham, Tom Verlaine began the event with an unaccompanied and undistorted electric guitar. Verlaine's set is a series of lilting and beautiful instrumental pieces over films of a nude man washing dishes, a woman posing with a musket outdoors, and a hectically cut montage of men and women socializing outside. Some of the actors are forgotten, some were factory regulars, and some are accomplished musicians in their own right; the dishwasher is poet John Giorno while the sculptor Marisol Escobar is featured in Verlaine's final film. This footage set the blueprint for the rest of the evening, yet Verlaine's austere instrumentals gave no indication of the show's sonic variety.

Martin Rev's subsequent set stands in harsh contrast. His chaotic accompaniment to "Superboy," a frenetically-shot screen test of a young man chugging Coca-Cola, features a single-note drum beat- reminiscent of his early work with Suicide- under a layer of pounding electronic noise, and is an early highlight of the evening. His following two pieces follow the same blueprint, with aggressive synthesizer loops, cacophonous keyboard pounding, and a few indiscernible vocals. *The music, along with Rev's outrageous outfit, seems superficially out of place in a cozy concert hall, but redeemed by it's creative merit.*

Friedberger's set is another sharp turn, playing poppy indie rock with a full band. A highlight is a single-shot screen test of the folk singer Donovan accompanied by Helen Adams' poem "Deep in the subway," adapted into a catchy rock song. The interplay between word, music, and footage is wistful and charming, more polished and accessible than the preceding pieces, but just as evocative. Likewise, her tribute to Edie Sedgwick, again present in a screen test, is obvious yet still touching and sincere. *At several points, I couldn't help but notice that the music and lyrics seems to match up with gestures and changes in expression on film. Whether or not this was intentional is debatable, but wouldn't be surprising*

Wareham shares Friedberger's backing band and musical approach, and the shift between the two performers is much less striking than the show's other transitions. His set is enjoyable and energetic, with a full and punchy sound less austere or poppy than his work with Galaxie 500 or Dean and Britta (his partner in the latter serves as bassist for these two sets). Substituting Friedberger's lyrical ambition for more standard narrative fare- his apparently biographical riffing on a young man licking a woman's boots in XX seems particularly bland- Wareham's set is the least memorable of the show, but still sure to please starstruck indie fans.

Cox finished the evening with another solo set, using a synthesizer and varied electronic effects to create music that is discordant, queezy, and oddly tuneful, a far cry from his more pop-oriented work with Deer Hunter and Atlas Sound. The final film features Warhol goofing around with poet XX, the only film to feature Warhol himself. Cox's peculiar accompaniment to the equally peculiar footage becomes a touching, beautiful, and oddly personal tribute to Warhol.

The artists featured in Exposed impressively evoke complex feelings and themes from primitive film footage, largely without the confines of narrative. Verlaine's section is pastoral and naive, Cox's is introspective and surreal, while Rev and Friedberger seem to offer alternately bleak and hopeful views of modern urban life. Exposed displays the brilliance of the performers and Warhol's most esoteric work in perfect complement to each other, creating a cohesive piece of art that will appeal to fans of film, music, and art alike. It is a nearly perfect tribute to an artist who excelled in turning limited source material into great art.