

Hasta La Vista,

UZZA

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All good things must come to an end. In JamRag's universe, two of them came this month with the departure of Tabatha and Rich Patterson to Minneapolis: The sad and premature demise of the band Uzza, and - just as significantly - JamRag's loss of its lead designer.

First things first. If you're like 99+% of metropolitan Detroit - some four million people - Uzza were one of the best bands you never saw or heard. It can't be said that they cut an especially broad swath through the area music scene during their brief tenure; recordings never got beyond the demo stage, and live appearances were too under-promoted, infrequent, and under-attended for that. This notwithstanding, Uzza were a delightful thing while they lasted.

Formed from the ashes of the longer-lived, much-troubled Radium, Uzza's nexus was Tabatha Patterson (until recently, Predovich) who, following an early '90s stint in an outfit called Elysium (first of Minneapolis, later of Brighton, England), hijacked the better aspects of that band's 80s/Anglo-pop vibe and infused into the first-generation Radium. Initially a trio and later abetted by a succession of quickly-fed-up drummers, Radium version 1.0 married Predovich's soaring vocals and hallucinatory lyrics to an urgent bass throb and brittle, melodic guitar.

Insert cliché here: The light that burns twice as bright, etc., etc. Radium quickly imploded thanks to the battling psychoses and power struggles of its membership, leaving behind a few promising but unfinished recordings, some memorable live shows, and a fair degree of enmity.

Enter Radium 2.0. Rich Patterson, David Krofchak, David Below, and David Johnson join Predovich in resuscitating Radium, adding a more fully fleshed-out sound; dual-pronged guitar attack plus burbling, growling keyboards provided Predovich with a more solid, versatile foundation for her alternately soaring and sneering vocals. Songs like "Creepy Crawl," with its oddly bouncy nu-wave pop vibe and belted vocals, and the beautiful, mesmeric "Raining Down Fire" established Radium as one worth watching. A flurry of short-run, self-produced releases followed, culminating in the melancholic, off-kilter, and oddly hypnotic *Tongue of the Ocean*.

Then, as per the usual for a Detroit band, it was time for people to get pissed off again.

Was it ennui, internal power struggles, what? For whatever

reason, shows and practices suddenly became less frequent, and soon Radium imploded for good. Scarcely missing a beat, Predovich, Patterson, and Johnson evolved into their finest incarnation: Uzza.

Named for Predovich's psychotic little dog (herself named after an Egyptian deity of murky origin), Uzza was the full flowering of the trio's psychologically-dense, emotionally-tense essence. Augmented by a new rhythm section and a second vocalist, Uzza drew upon influences as disparate as Kurt Weill, Tom Waits, Rush, and Patti Smith to paint a sonic tapestry infused with loss, longing, rage, and hallucination. "Free Fall," a later composition, paired a Weill-esque cabaret style musical backdrop to an alternately sneering and terror-stricken vocal narration about being in a car going over a waterfall, as well as some rather nasty intimations concerning rats. Older material such as "Raining Down Fire" was revamped and infused with new life, honed to a new level of subtlety and sharpness. Everything was looking, and sounding, good. Very good.

And then: Poof. Gone. After just a handful of shows, Uzza called it a day, playing their final gig in late August at the Cadieux Cafe prior to the departure of the newly-wed Patterson and Patterson to the arctic netherworld that is Minneapolis.

So: Another one bites the dust. There's vague talk of a later regrouping for recording purposes, a tentative plan at best. Tabatha and Rich plan on starting something new in their new hometown, and Tabatha's also intent on resuscitating her earlier solo noise/damage project, Velvet Rat, so the world hasn't heard the last of them yet. But as is so often the case, Uzza was a band that came and went too soon. Hey - you should've been there.

And on a more personal JamRag note: This magazine will certainly miss Tabatha's gimlet eye for design. The fancy new logo we've been sporting lately, as well as innumerable other elements dotted throughout these pages, were her doing; JamRag owes her a debt of gratitude, as well as a check. (It's in the mail; trust us...). It is our hope that as the snow piles up and the arctic winds of Minnesota begin to whip through the city's frozen tundra, Tabatha will consider the joys of telecommuting for employment and will once again allow her work to grace our pages. Fingers crossed.

