

# The Frames at the Rock Garden

By Kevin Courtney

NOW that all the Commitments fuss has finally died down, Glen Hansard, alias Outspan Foster, can start concentrating on what he really wants to be — a rock star. The Frames have been signed to Island Records for more than a year, and so far have released only one single, "The Dancer", which has been reissued almost as many times as An Emotional Fish's "Celebrate".

The Frames don't appear to have improved much since they were first foisted on the Irish public. Last Thursday's gig at the Rock Garden might have had its ups, but mostly it was an evening of middles and downs. The band seems to have sunk under the weight of its ambitions, becoming ponderous and weighty where once it was quick and lithe. Glen still hasn't decided whether to sound like Bob Dylan or Mike Scott, but at least he knows what he wants to look like: a red-headed version of Marc Bolan.

The large line-up of The Frames leaves plenty of room for confusion, and the sounds of violins, electric guitars and bass often clash, but when everything does jell, then you see the potential power of The Frames in all its ragged glory. These moments, though, are few and far between, and for the most part the gig is a series of missed opportunities and unexplored ideas.

Much has been made of Glen's "star quality", and he's certainly got some devoted fans down the front rows, but this is hardly enough to compensate for a clutch of dull and derivative songs and an overwrought, heavy-handed delivery. There's very little to grab on to in the music of The Frames, except for the odd whoop and holler, and if Glen wants to end up on the world's turntables, he'll have to start writing songs from his heart and not his oversized head.