

# DRY CLEANING @ FOUNDRY

**“I spent £17 on mushrooms for you,” Florence Shaw is telling the Foundry crowd. “Cause I’m silly.”**

Except this isn’t a mid-set rant about overspending on mushrooms. Dry Cleaning lead singer Shaw is in the middle of set highlight ‘Strong Feelings’, bemoaning a lost lover in her unique style. Shaw doesn’t sing; rather, she speak-sings, only occasionally raising her voice above a loud whisper.

Behind her, the rest of the band thrash out tight post-punk jams that at times threaten to overwhelm. But holding it all together is Shaw, centre stage, the steady eye in the middle of this raging storm.

It wasn’t always meant to be like this. In 2017 Shaw was still teaching illustration at university, thoroughly fed up with life and keeping a record of her wandering thoughts, when guitarist Tom Dowse invited her to join the newly-formed band. They haven’t looked back since. Foundry is packed tonight, just as the rest of the venues have been on their UK tour.

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At times, the gig feels like each member of Dry Cleaning is having their own private jam session while Florence reads out her old tweets on stage. Each of those wandering thoughts from her lecturing days is delivered with an exaggerated eye roll, or shake of the head, or audible sigh. The delicious contrast between the band’s furious jams and Shaw’s deadpan delivery comes alive in a live setting.

Some lines are the type that don’t normally make it all the way from brain to mouth. ‘That seems like a lot of garlic,’ she muses on ‘Strong Feelings’. Others hint at a simmering dissatisfaction beneath the surface. ‘Everyday, he’s a dick...’ she huffs on ‘Her Hippo’. On ‘New Long Leg’, someone is taking a Florence-style ear-bashing: ‘You’re a spoon pal, you are’.

As her dissatisfaction rises to the surface, the band around her raises the volume. Shaw is immovable on stage, keeping herself together even as the world pushes and pulls her around. ‘You’re always stressing me out,’ she (speak) sings. ‘Don’t press me.’

On ‘Scratchcard Lanyard’, that deep-seated unease with modern life starts to take a clearer form. She talks of making a ceramic shoe, of learning how to dance, of joining a knitting circle. Of – yes – buying scratchcards and getting lanyards. But ultimately, the swipe-and-snap-and-skip culture isn’t doing her any good. ‘Do everything and feel nothing,’ she snarls.

And she remains there, centre stage, rolling her eyes at the storm and turning her nose up at the dark clouds overhead. “Things are shit,” she says. “But they’re gonna be OK.” Maybe we could all do with being a bit more Florence sometimes.

