



## Earth and Stebmo

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Sunday, 03 May 2009  
<http://brainwashed.com/>

Dylan Carlson and his band of outlaws are on a European tour to celebrate two decades of Earth. Far from playing a "greatest hits" show, Carlson continues to explore his Ennio Morricone-infused country sound and only performed the most recent Earth material on stage. Carlson obviously realises that there is no point in trading on past glories when the present is so sweet. The future is looking peachy too as the new music being showcased matches up to and possibly surpasses all of Earth's recent highs.

21 April, Dublin, Ireland

Stebmo, the project of Earth's Steve Moore, opened the evening's proceedings. Moore's loose electric piano playing has a strong jazz vibe to it, the light touch of his fingers dancing across the keyboard. Don McGreevy's drumming not only complemented Moore perfectly but the fun that the two musicians were having was more than obvious, big grins and knowing nods being exchanged frequently. Their set was fun and vibrant, a combination of original material and covers of Ron Carter and John Coltrane thrown in. The music went down well with the crowd and both Moore and McGreevy were visibly pleased with how things went.

Moore and McGreevy returned to the stage a few minutes later with the rest of Earth, McGreevy swapping his drumsticks for the bass. Beginning with "Carrion Crow" from the group's last album, Carlson led the group through a set that focussed almost exclusively on tracks from *The Bees Made Honey in the Lion's Skull*. While the overall structure of the pieces remains recognisable, each player enriched

their parts with little flourishes and details. In particular, the shruti box intro to "The Bees Made Honey..." was extended with some jamming. Once the piece got into its stride, Earth began to really shine. Always a highlight when listening to the album, live "The Bees Made Honey..." is pure magic.

The final 15 minutes of the set were taken up with a new untitled piece that shows that Earth might have another 20 years left in them. The hard hitting drumming of Adrienne Davies during this piece contrasted with her softer, measured approach throughout the rest of the performance. While keeping in the same doom country style as the last couple of albums, this new piece also looks back to Earth's louder drone-centred style. The group slowly (no surprises there) increased the intensity of the music, ending the set with a lot of controlled feedback and an electric atmosphere in the room. It might be too soon to call it a masterpiece but it certainly blew my socks off.

What impressed me most about Earth's performance was how well they play as a unit and, much like Stebmo earlier in the night, there was a strong sense of enjoyment and comfort in each other's playing emanating from the stage. Above all, despite the respect for Earth evident in the crowd, all four musicians had a humble air to them which made the music that bit more real. This atmosphere and the sheer power of the music made the evening most pleasurable and I am looking forward to the next tour and new album Carlson promised before playing the new song.