It had the potential to be the greatest one-two punch ever: two of my favorite bands from 1979 playing together on a Saturday night. Classic Ruins, crusty and fast, and the Lyres, bouncy and intense descendants of DMZ. Two years ago, it would have been at Cantone’s; in 1981, the “scene” has moved to the Underground.

Walking into the club (and paying my $4, another change from two years ago), I recognized many of the people I would have seen at Cantone’s in ’79. A friend from Boston house who I used to dance with was there. Cathy, the waitress from Cantone’s, stood in the back and watched the Lyres respectfully just as she would have done in ’79. And I took my usual place up front, ready to dance at full speed all night.

I came away from the evening disappointed. Two bands that had always stood for a good time had left me bored and wondering: how music in Boston has changed.

The Lyres started out their set with “Mighty,” and “Cinderella,” a couple of very energetic songs from the old DMZ days, and then fell into a rut playing one song after another with the same boogie progression and baseline. Musically, they were fine — Peter Greenberg is a good fifteens-style guitar player, and Memo Mass (frontman and keyboard) doesn’t yell at the drummer between songs any more. But their music was repetitive and dull, and they seemed to lack the energy they once had.

Classic Ruins had almost the same effect on me with their set. Starting with “Labatt’s” and their cover of “Rawhide,” I figured that a good set was on the way. But even their old classics, like “Nasty Singer” and “The Midnight Special,” were good. This was the only band that had the energy I was looking for.

But still, attitudes don’t need practice. Another problem is that both bands perform material which has very strong traditional influences. The Lyres perform classic sixties key-board centered pop, while the Classics play classic rock. But the result is the same: a good set was on the way. But even their old classics, like “Nasty Singer” and “The Midnight Special,” were good. This was the only band that had the energy I was looking for.

Perhaps, then, no musical taste is Boston and the re-charged with old bands behind. The indie, don’t set guard, and “guitar” means pulling out the extra or The Stooges, the Greatest Hit. Enough phillies go out and see bands. Lyres off.

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