

# New kid on the festival block impresses

The Alex Blake Charlie Sessions saw a modest turnout but the bands and punters made it a top-notch experience. **BY DYLAN TAN**

## Singapore

**S**INGAPORE has a new music festival, but what a pity some people forgot to show up.

Comprising of female-fronted acts, The Alex Blake Charlie Sessions on Dec 7 saw a modest turnout of only about 3,000.

There were too few bodies to fill the cavernous former Pasir Panjang Power Station – which, by the way, has been given an Instagram-worthy facelift with plenty of neon lights and air-conditioning by organiser 24 Owls – but the bands and punters didn't let that stop them from having a good time.

All 14 acts – ranging from Icelandic-Brit punk-rock trip Dream Wife to Finnish pop export Alma, LCD Soundsystem off-shoot Ladies of LCD Soundsystem and more – played their hearts out.

Some, like Mercury Prize Northern Irish soul-folk singer-songwriter Soak performed to only about 100 fans because of an early time slot but never once did the bands or the audience let each other down.

It was even more heartening to see Soak frontwoman Bridie Monds-Watson and members of Dream Wife – who also played an early afternoon slot – hang around the venue after their sets to mingle with the crowd and check out the rest of the line-up themselves.

The sense of community and spirit of comradeship rang strong: Stella Donnelly not only gave a shoutout to Cate Le Bon on stage but was later spotted near the front when the latter was playing; while Anna of the North remarked how good Kero Kero Bonito's (KKB) drums sounded while they were sound-checking instead of getting annoyed by the interruption mid-set.

A number of factors could have



The female-fronted acts included (clockwise from above) Kero Kero Bonito, Charly Bliss, Stella Donnelly and homegirl Ginette Chittick.

PHOTOS: ALVIN HO

excite that cool graphic designer in the art department or the quiet intern who plugs into her AirPods 24-7 at first glance; so a casual music fan might be tempted to skip ABC because of the lack of a crowd-pulling, mainstream headliner.

But for the musically adventurous – that is, the kind who tunes in to alternative online stations like NPR or KEXP regularly and reads indie music blogs like Pitchfork and BrooklynVegan religiously – the gamble definitely paid off because there was plenty of fine new music to discover.

You don't have to be a fan of Charly Bliss to be won over by their Weezer-sized guitar riffs and Rilo-

