

Flashback at The Cavern Club, Liverpool, 12th Feb, 2006.

This was a show I did not want to miss, being into Beat music myself and hearing that 'Flashback' was a force to be reckoned with I made my journey from Nottingham up North to Liverpool to see and hear for myself. On the way Radio One was playing the top 20 best selling British Artists since the millennium and it got me thinking of how the music industry (and its artists) have been in steady decline since the end of the Beat era. Artists such as Oasis being as big as they are in this country at number 10 just beating Bob the Builder at 11! The sales of one children's single almost outselling Oasis the 'grandchild' descendant of Beat Music, it just goes to show how few sales there are nowadays compared to back in the 60's.

Anyway, I digress. Back to the review...

The sounds of a musically tight but lacklustre Rock'n'roll act (who shall remain nameless) floated up the seemingly never-ending steps up onto Mathew Street. This is Liverpool's 'Cavern Club'. Whilst we walked towards it and down the stone spiralling steps I hoped that this was not the level of music we'd travelled two and half hours up the country to hear! Luckily, down in the re-created famous cellar, I was soon party to the show compare, a Mr Wes Paul, a Liverpool entrepreneur type, dressed in a Black trilby hat, bow tie and perfect tuxedo announcing the next band as being "all the way from York; the one and only Flashback".



I felt that the audience was ready for something strong after the previous performance, they seemed hungry to enjoy the band in black leather aka Hamburg Beatles. Flashback, a three-piece outfit of Guitar, Bass and drums took to the arched stage and soon welcomed the audience to this mighty venue.

Almost without warning they dived eagerly into their opening handshake of 'Twist and Shout'. No modern stuff here; the band were armed with very old looking Hofner guitars. I recognised an old blonde Hofner Club 40 used by the guitarist Pete and the Stu Sutcliffe Hofner 500/5 bass of Kev. But damn they were playing them hard! They were certainly not treating these poor instruments like the museum artefacts they could well be, no way, the guitarist's hand was a blur and the bass strings were being struck as if he wanted to break them clean off. But wow, what a sound, real 'beat music', real instruments, real energy and feel, no clutter, no frilly bits, no effect pedals in sight just the song in its honest and true raw form, it was a breath of fresh, err... umm... hot and damp Cavern air. Twist and Shout was sung by the bassist, into a microphone left very low by our compere, but he clearly meant business, he just stretched his legs out wide in an Elvis type stance and got on with the job, the audience responded immediately with rapturous applause.

After a cheeky quip from Pete, a Gene Wilder look-a-like guitarist asking his colleague about the mic stand "does it keep going down on yer?" he led the band straight into the Stones favourite 'All Over Now'. The guitarist also sang a great lead vocal on the song and it included some nifty-quick drum rolls around the Cavern's in house drum kit by Phil the drummer. We were then treated to a stomping version of 'I Like It' by Gerry and The Pacemakers and 'One After 909' the early Lennon/McCartney song released on their last album Let It Be.

Notable drum beat again here, defining the true meaning of 'Beat band' (as the group like to describe themselves), double bass drum followed by the smack of the snare, "boom-boom smack, boom-boom smack" repeatedly and tight, really bloody tight! The song ended with a long and complicated outro drum fill from the drummer and took us straight into 'Hello Little Girl' showing the band could handle two-part harmony no problem.



After the Flashback treatment of 'Glad All Over' and 'I Saw Here Standing There' the band reminded us of some old Granada TV footage of The Beatles performing the Ritchie Barrett number 'Some Other Guy' at the original Cavern in 1962. The TV station caught the energy of the young Beatles performing the song and Flashback recreated the famous performance note perfect for the Liverpool audience. They then 'crossed the ocean' for a moment to the song recorded by Tony Sheridan and The Beatles in Hamburg called 'My Bonnie'. I thought I caught a stray chord mistake in this one (the guitarist played a minor when it should've been a major) during the intro however he soon brought it back with a corking lead vocal and a 'neck breaker' of a guitar solo. The solo obviously caught the attention of Ray Johnson (a founder of Cavern City Tours of Liverpool) who was hard at work on the sound desk, Ray lifted the volume of the Hofner guitar almost to breaking point but the old lady just sounded even more 'fab'. My Bonnie ended with guitar and bass necks lifted to each accent and a sudden but amazingly tight dead stop. The audience, who was now mostly dancing, just lapped it up.



It was time for a loo break for me. However, in mid spray the searing vocal delivery from the bassist of the old hit 'Kansas City/Hey Hey Hey' cut right through the damaged black toilet door and sickening concoction of urine and lemon toilet block odour. This, as well as the heavy smell, soon had me buttoning up my fly as quick as possible to catch the end of the song! The final two offerings from the band brought us 'Rock'n'roll Music' and Little Richard's 'Long Tall Sally'.

Both songs were sung 'full out' in concert pitch, unfaltering to the last enthusiastic rolling drums of the last chorus, the guys had the Hofner necks over the front of the stage pointing into the audience and it came to an end.

This would be a good effort from any group of young Beat Group but amazingly the average age of this band is 50! These older guys still have what it takes to put over the sharpness, freshness, energy and feel of a 'twenty something' band, they still even look Rock'n'roll. A thoroughly enjoyable forty minutes. 'Beat Group' is the perfect description for these boys; it 'beat' everything else I've seen this year! If you get the chance... go see them.

Reviewed by

Ian Watts