

# JIMM O'DONNELL LIVE MUSIC BLOG



## **AFTERFAB - September 3, 2016 - Courthouse Center for the Arts - W Kingston RI**

What a GREAT room! I'm tempted to make the drive again some time, all 21/2 (at least) hours of it, especially for a small-ensemble chamber or folk set. The Courthouse Center for the Arts, in West Kingstown RI, is room of larger proportions than our last dose of AfterFab, at the Somerville Theater- quite a while ago, now- a year or two and as many band members to 'swap-out.'

And what a great-sounding room this is, too! As soon as AfterFab came out and got going, I was struck, almost literally, with some of the cleanest, most articulate music to pulse my eardrums in a while- not to mention pleasurable - can you 'imagine' a whole concert, a whole evening even, of not-Beatles Beatles songs? You know: the solo songs by each of the Fab Four individually (more or less) after the band's breakup? I can- but I don't have to! Seriously, what a great concept - who among us hasn't put together a mix-tape or two (pre-CD, cassette, that is) of these songs? It's like a consistent but dynamically diverse radio programme.

This is not a 'tribute' band per se- no wigs, costumes, makeup (well, maybe makeup) here, just a half-dozen skillful musicians performing these fun classics, intermittently punctuated with bits & bobs of post- Beatles trivia. Now, consider this: these are not interpretations or re-versions; they are technically faithful to the original particulars (like the arrangements, or the charts, I'd suppose) but they are not exactly exact copies either. Just enough variance in the output is all it takes to 'up' the entertainment value a wee tad. So, they are not a 'covers' band either; maybe a cover/trib category needs to be contrived.

The best example of this 'faithful yet tweaked' tactic (and even more amazing as well) is evidenced in front-man Jon Paquin's singing - can you imagine one person covering four different singers' voices, phrasing, intonation, et cetera... can you imagine just doing it at all, for starters, and then doing it well- like, above-adequate- beyond capable or merely competent, while working without the need to be constantly 'convincing'...? (Again, I happily bear witness) These are mere humans. after all, and there's only five of 'em with instruments (this ain't no eight-man Floyd production, plus backing singers). The music before, after, and during the break is sense, too- it's the music of the Beatles proper.

Ad Boc would seem most likely to be the band's leader, as most of the between-songs banter comes from the microphone his guitar-and-keyboard station. another guitar adds to the overall effect, and dig this: she's new and I didn't notice, because the player she replaced was also a woman- purely by happenstance, too! The keyboard player is some kinda new, too, and this is the drummer's first show with the band. almost all of the grey hair in the band is on the bass player's head, but it really looks good on him - and he ain't slowed down none at all..

Would it be sacrilege to suggest that AfterFab's "Imagine" is actually an improvement over the original? (Perhaps not really; it's just one of my lesser-favorite songs in the catalog.) We all know the original arrangement and instrumentation is/are sparse, of course... so picture a full band playing the song, without leaving anyone out but without anyone over-powering it. This way is, arguably (admittedly), more interesting- or more stimulating, with going too far. And ya know all those vocals in "Silly Love Song?" You gotta hear this! Lastly, let's take note of AfterFab's professionalism- again, right up to appropriate levels without overdoing it. Jon Paquin, certainly a good-looking rock-star-kinda dude, has hair about as long as the Beatles ever had theirs, and he tosses it around effectively. His other antics are pretty perfect, too. Guitarist Ad Boc switches to his keys every now and then; this makes for a little dynamic in the visual, and allows a few extra sounds to issue out- any time a sax is called for, a fake-but-effective fake one comes out of one o' them sets of ivories... or maybe it's that device the other guy has hanging on his ears and around his neck like a harmonica.

Now, back to the venue.

I gotta tell ya, this is one of my three favorites in these three years, I do believe! The Sinclair in Boston (where we saw Twiddle) is one, not so much for decor or atmosphere, but for intelligent and effective logistics. Another is the supremely beautiful Paramount (where we saw Barry McGuire with the New Christy Minstrels)- old and ornate, classy and quaint, and picture-perfect sound (huh?) with not a bad seat in the house. Take all those characteristics, bring 'em together, and integrate them into a beautiful old, stone structure in Rhode Island, right near Narragansett. This place is beautiful outside and in; the physical space and the atmosphere are every bit as 'clean' as the sound, and the layout is pretty much flawless. The not-too-large, not-too-small auditorium, which is upstairs, has a simple and flawless layout. The stage juts right into the room, shy of the middle, enough space is left for dancing, and the seating goes (logically enough) around the front three walls. It really is nice.

It's a damn shame my date/not-date chose to work (or whatever) - I think it's a safe bet just about ANYone, no matter how busy-brained or self-absorbed, would fetch-up delightedly and enjoy the show as much for the surroundings as for the band (almost).

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