

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

Old Website Article Backup

Articles prior to December 5, 2018

The Complete Unknowns ? Review

Written by David on October, 25 2009

Whether planned or not, the musical choreography and instrumental progression of "The Complete Unknowns" Saturday night's concert at the Strand Theatre was a thing of beauty itself.

For a group that has played together for about a year, these four dudes are an exceptionally tight, fluid and professional band of musical aficionados. Saturday's show was like a folk festival in itself ranging across the different styles and variations of Bob Dylan and the tunes and musical experiments of The Band, including an 8-piece horn section, scored for and played, remarkably well, by students of Shelbyville Middle School.

Even within the improvisational confines of performing 3 live sets, the layered crescendo of sounds from the acoustic opening to an electric folk middle and to the full-bodied sound of the horn finale was an amazing thing to hear and behold. Repeatedly throughout the night "The Complete Unknowns" magically conjured up the spirit, music and feel of 1960's music festivals, especially the vibe seen in classic concert films. Listening to and watching this band was like hearing my father's vinyl records come alive before my eyes.

The opening acoustic set began as the crowd was still arriving at the Strand and was essentially the band warming-up and opening for itself, according to bassists Adam Kruse. It was, however, during this set of the traditional roots of folk music, before electric sound, that the audience got a taste of Dylan and the remarkable vocal mimicking of his distinct vocal patterns and twangs by guitarist Rod Carter.

During the second set of Dylan tunes, it became obvious that "the Complete Unknowns" were and are more than a mere cover band. While at times they do mimic with exceptional clarity, they also interpret the music of Dylan in their own unique and lively fashion. This band's version of "Lovesick" is a great song played well by a band which deeply explores Dylan and revels in his musical journeys. The performance was like taking a song for a lonely walk in the rain up and down a street; it was instrumental poetry at its best. Somewhere in Europe, on his "Never Ending Tour," Dylan, sitting in a coffee-house, would be happy to know that this band is spiritually recreating his tunes and songs for a new generation.

In point of fact, the crisp, tight, music of "The Complete Unknowns" is an intense journey fueled and driven by each musician individually and in collaborative harmony with each other. From the harmonies of Mike Kruse's harmonica to the driving drums of Glen Allman and guitar leads of Carter and the thumping bass of Adam Kruse, one can tell that these four dudes really respect, revere and enjoy the music they play and they have a damn- good-time doing it. This was especially evident in the last set of the music of "The Band."

This last set evolved from extended jam-sessions of interplaying instruments and voices to an experimental crescendo incorporating a horn section of budding eighth grade musicians. This unique horn section was the brainchild of Adam Kruse, who doubles as a band director at the middle school.

The junior-troupe of musically precocious and talented performers consists of four saxophone players, two trumpeters and two trombonists: on alto sax, Hannah Nuthak and Hayden DePrez; on tenor sax, Perla Alamillo; on baritone sax Cameron Kiernicki; trumpeters, Scot Gill and Nathan Scruggs and trombones played by Jimmy Lardin and Devin Graham.

These kids with horns were the masterstroke of the night adding an even bigger, significant sound and resonance to the musicality of "The Complete Unknowns." To the credit of the band, Adam Kruse in particular, the final song of the night was an extended jam session of 12 musicians on a stage; with a brass ensemble that added a full-tone to the conclusion of the night's musical journey.

"It was an enjoyable performance," said Art Edington, a local musician in the crowd. "It was a great experience for these kids to perform in a different environment. It lets them learn how each part contributes to the overall sound and performance on stage."

This horn section, which only rehearsed for about three weeks, according to Kruse, was seamlessly and effortlessly

incorporated into a grand finale of driving music and instrumental joy that was only made more poignant by the sheer youth at the heart of the song.

This guest review does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

Submitted by: Terrance Aldridge

Images on this post:

Archive File: 2009-10-25_the-complete-unknowns-#8211;-review.pdf

©2022 - Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.