

Concert Review 2 - Long John Baldry With Special Guest Tony Ashton

Spuugh - Vaals , Holland , Saturday May 25 1997



Sunday 25 of May I went to a concert of Long John Baldry featuring Tony Ashton. Although Holland is a small country I still had to drive for more then 3 hours to get from my hometown to Vaals which is in the very south of The Netherlands. In fact a part of the town is situated in Germany. Name of the venue is Spuugh. It was not just Long John Baldry but some others too because it was 'Spuugh Blues Night'. The program : 20:00 doors open / 21:00 Somebody Wrong Blues Band / 21:35 pause / 21:50 Long John Baldry & Band / 23:00 pause / 23:15 Chris Farlow & the Rhythm & Blues Train 00:45 End.

This place 'Spuugh' is a prove that little halls doesn't have to be filthy and ugly. Spuugh is a beautiful little hall , the sound is very good and all over the place are lights so the bands can use the lightshow.

The German 'Somebody Wrong Blues Band' plays rock-blues , often more rock then blues. Well known to Purple/Blackmore fans was the song 'Honey Hush'. Other songs included 'Tore down' and Chuck Berry's 'No money down'. They played nine songs and it ended exactly at 21:35.

At ten o'clock the Long John Baldry Band entered the stage. They had to wait because the soundman hadn't noticed they were on and the tape played on. After some time the tape was stopped and they kicked off with a swinging instrumental tune. Solo's for saxophone , organ and guitar. Tony Ashton plays an old Hammond organ and for the piano parts he uses a Roland keyboard. During his playing Ashton makes all kinds of silly gestures and he keeps on making faces. The guy can't be serious. The saxophone player , John Lee Sanders , plays an important role in the band , not only does he play the sax he also plays keyboards and sings. He introduced Long John Baldry after the first song and on came this really long man looking like a dandy. Again he was dressed in a nice white jacket , vest and tie , black stripped trousers and a white summer hat. A true gentleman. Imagine the man is 57 but still a personality on stage. He started in the early sixties (his bands included a young Rod Stewart and one Reg Dwight a.k.a. Elton John) He also recorded a nice version of 'Morning dew' as did Episode Six. And he's still around. His voice is in perfect condition , wonderful sounding rhythm and blues. After the third song 'Shake that thing' - or as Baldry says it 'Shake that theeeeeeng' he introduced the band. Next to Baldry , Sanders and Ashton there are 'Papa' John King - guitar , Nigel Portman Smith - bass (Baldry "You have seen him on television , in theaters and in movies : now he's here) and the 'Baby' of the band Al 'Baby' Webster - drums. Song four was 'Midnight in New Orleans' played in a fantastic way with great vocals by Baldry and did it swing ! Now it was time for John Lee Sanders to sing a song. He did a Freddie King song which I think was called 'My baby left town'. This little man has a very strong voice and during the guitar solo he shouted " Come on 'Papa' you know how I feel" inspiring 'Papa' John King to play a breathtaking solo. Next came 'A thrill's a thrill' and 'It ain't easy going ahead when you're going down'.

Then Long John Baldry introduced Tony Ashton again and again the crowd (some 200 people) went wild , lots of Ashton fans in the public. After once more making very silly faces and moves Tony played and sung a song that's unknown to me but it sounded good. He was accompanied by drums , bass and guitar. Baldry and Sanders left the stage. At the end of the song Sanders came back. After the song Baldry shouted out "Tony Ashton our very very special guest" , Ashton , serious for a moment , said : "Long John Baldry the man who made it all possible". Baldry "Tony Baxton ladies and gentlemen , Tony Baxton" , Ashton replied "Jack Baldry everyone Jack Baldry".

Then it was time for 'Don't try to lay no boogie woogie on the king of rock and roll'. The drummer did a sort of drum solo during which the others looked at him applauded and yelled to keep him going , that was wonderful to see. I mean no bandmembers leaving the stage while the drummer works his ass off , no they left their instruments and walked towards the drums and had fun. Only Baldry left the stage for a second but just to get something to drink. This was already the last song. The crowd cheered out for more and the band returned to play song number ten which was a kind of cajun thing. Baldry and Sanders shared the vocals. John Lee Sanders sang the Johnny Cash hit 'Get rhythm' in between. He said he would sing a couplet in Elvis style and so he did ! Back to the cajun tune and then it was really over.

They played for about 70 minutes and it was very enjoyable , good to see Tony Ashton on stage again he played some wonderful 'Hammond' solo's and....no , he didn't stop drinking. (Remember the P.A.L. song ?). They didn't play their whole set because of the 'Blues night' formula of this evening , a pity. After a pause it was time for Chris Farlowe to perform but I had to drive for three more hours again so I decided to go home where I arrived at 2:30. Getting up the next morning wasn't easy ! But as they say : it was worth it !

Hans van der Meiden, Holland