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Deborah Bonham, The Studio, 11/09/04

By Dave Hill

A double-edged sword, it's purely co-incidence that Deborah Bonham happens to be the sister of the late iconic Black Country drummer who played with his mate the singer in a combo called Band of Joy.

Drummer and singer were then drafted into the New Yardbirds, whose name change to Led Zeppelin dragged all concerned into a maelstrom the likes of which the world had rarely seen beyond the Beatles. So. We've got that out of the way now - because it has no baring whatsoever on a magnificent performance at The Studio.

Quite simply put, we were served up a wonderful, swampy, soulful Cajun-rock n roll stew that owed as much to the spirit of The Faces as one of Deborah's acknowledged heroes - Maggie Bell of Stone The Crows.

With a large chunk of selections from 'The Old Hyde'- her first album

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in almost 20 years – the bonhomie of Deborah and her band was a delight.

A healthy slab of Hammond-style keyboards opened proceedings , locking in to the groove of a very fine rhythm section that included Jerry Shirley , late of Humble Pie - their frontman Steve Marriott apparently another inspiration for Deborah.

It's not everyone that can take on the classic 'Stay With Me Baby' and come away unscathed, but on this occasion, the lady done very good indeed. 'Black Coffee' (another star track from 'The Old Hyde') followed and Deborah's 'live' version of the Humble Pie song was an absolute treat – and that was just one half of a double-whammy with the Anne Peebles chestnut, 'I Can't Stand The Rain' .

Another selection from the album, 'Need Your Love So Bad, had a special local resonance; the magnificent slow blues that Fleetwood Mac made their own over thirty years ago originally featured in their number Hartlepool-born guitarist Jeremy Spencer.

With 'No Angel', guitarist and husband Peter Bullick responded more than appropriately to the Bonham composition, earning his supper with another example of the sympathetic, tasty work that he carried throughout the night.

Later, 'Religion' – another self-penned song from Deborah – prompted a quiet reference to events in Beslan.

"It was pin-drop time. We were rapt; the kind of moment that stops time. Like Jeff Buckley singing 'Lilac Wine'. Remarkable."

Dave Hill

'McCartney's 'Maybe I'm Amazed' - up there with 'God Only Knows' as one of the finest love songs ever – seemed imbued with a band performance that reflected the understated swagger of The Faces version.

With switch to acoustic guitar for bassist Ian Rowley, Bullicks' electric guitar part picked out the unmistakable introduction to 'The Battle of Evermore'.

Trading vocals with Deborah, pianist/acoustic guitarist Gerard Louis (a Richie Havens look-alike who even sounded remarkably like the man) was a revelation as the two stood, almost shoulder to shoulder, at the mic. Fantastically, we were all captured in time for four or five minutes, magically swept up in the mystic of Led Zeppelin.

The undoubted highlight of the evening was the startlingly poignant performance of 'The Old Hyde' itself, a song written by Deborah that reflects on an old farmhouse owned her late brother; a special place in her soul that allowed her to ponder in song not only on John's passing, but also on that of her other brother and their father, John Henry Senior.

It was pin-drop time. We were rapt; the kind of moment that stops time. Like Jeff Buckley singing 'Lilac Wine'. Remarkable.

Called back for more with Zep's 'Rock n Roll', the night ended in fine style.

For those of you cynics who made their minds up not to come along before even coming through the doors, you should be ashamed. Don't make that same mistake again.

Fantastic voice; fantastic band; fantastic music – Deborah Bonham and band are from and for the heart, soul and feet. No one does what they do. We need them.

last updated: 27/06/07

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Steveyboy

Heard the Old Hyde this morning on Radio 2 Awesome!! Just hope we hear it again

ig

OKAY? OKAY??? She's bloody fantastic. Name another UK soul singer with her prowess (outside Maggie Bell)

Welder

I saw her on Saturday. She was awesome. The above review is spot on. She's doing more gigs this year, I'd challenge anyone to go to a gig and come away saying she was 'okay'.

Daniel Badface

Yeah - I saw Deborah Bonham a few years ago. She was... okay.

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