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AfterFab score playing solo Beatles material to Chelmsford crowd

By Bill Copeland on February 1, 2015



AfterFab has become one of the more interesting tribute bands on the New England music scene. Focusing on the post-Beatles solo material of George, John, Paul, and Ringo, the six piece conjures a fun, meaningful 1970s party vibe. They've also got the musical chops to get these songs down pat. Last night's show at Chelmsford Center For The Arts in Chelmsford, Massachusetts was a

blast. It was also a testimony to AfterFab's nuanced renditions of these grand masterpieces and minor, lesser known gems.

Front man Jon Paquin looks like he just arrived by time machine from the early to mid-1970s. His wiry, long haired, bright eyed appearance and the way he moves around on stage might make one wonder if he was just let out of suspended animation for the first time since the glory days of rock. Opening with John Lennon's "Nobody Told Me," he nailed the vocal phrasing just perfectly. Not an imitator, Paquin sings it in the right clip, and hence he makes one feel the way they felt when they first heard it.

AfterFab's rhythm section is made up of drummer Tom Evans and bassist Mike Bishop, and the two kept the groove going strong on Paul McCartney's "Come And Get It." The rhythmic pair kept many songs going with a mighty throb throughout the evening, adapting themselves well to the various backing players the former Beatles had recorded with all those years ago.

A more obscure gem, Paul McCartney's "Eat At Home" from his 1971 Ram album, benefited from the backing vocal coos and its moving, grooving rhythmic click. Next, Paquin nailed the vocal phrasing on Ringo Star's early hit "Photograph," singing it with warmth and affection. The harmony vocals here were down pat, and it brought back pleasant memories of when we first heard Ringo singing it on the radio. Keyboardists Brian Eyberg and Ad Boc added a lot to the song's texture with their sprightly melodies.

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After Fab, trying out Harrison's "End Of The Line" for the first time, gave lead guitarist Lauren Passarelli a chance to strut her stuff. She rendered the melodic line well, and the harmony vocals were icing on the cake. Passarelli played the tender pedal steel melody of Harrison's "All Things Must Pass" in fine support of Paquin's emotive, forlorn vocal delivery.

Paquin was back in front man action for Lennon's "Watching The Wheels," from Lennon's final album Double Fantasy. One could see how much he enjoyed singing it, and that made it even more fun to follow and sing along with. Next, a brisk paced "Nineteen Hundred Eighty Five" found Paquin managing the up-tempo lyrical verses as he lead the band through this motion filled McCartney song from the 1970s. Vocal coos, thumpy action from the rhythm boys, and an overall orchestration of the sound made a strong impression.



Passarelli had fun playing the brittle, sparkly melodies from Lennon's loosey, goosey up-tempo "Whatever Gets You Through The Night." The keyboardists too pumped in plenty of sounds that made the song what it was. Without missing a beat, Paquin continued with the Lennon material, jumping right into "Instant Karma." A jaunty pace from the rhythm section kept the melody instruments and vocals afloat beautifully. Speaking of AfterFab's rhythm section; inspired drum work from Evans pushed Ringo Starr's "Back Off Boogaloo forward with a hip, rocking action packed momentum.

Moving into the late 1980s with Harrison's "Devil's Radio," the band maintained its bouncy groove and Passarelli delivered the guitar goods with her feisty phrasing. She played an edgy guitar intro to McCartney's "Hi Hi Hi" as well, making her guitar cry out the notes, like the guitar had a voice of its own.

There was energy in the room, and the band was feeling it when they went into the Harrison penned, Starr recorded song "It Don't Come Easy." Likewise, they rocked right out on McCartney's "Junior's Farm." Ad Boc had switched to lead guitar duties for this one, and his stinging guitar line spearheaded the players with a fresh crispness. Meanwhile, Paquin belted out the engaging lyrics. Announcing that AfterFab had just leaned yet another solo Beatles number, Paquin lead the band into "Silly Love Songs," a number that rode steadily on Bishop's exuberant bass guitar work. The keyboardists filled in beautifully the strings and horns that wrapped around this delight.

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Paquin led the band through the heartfelt Lennon ballad "Jealous Guy." Lush, sweet synth lines wrapped it up with warm tones as Paquin infused it with vulnerability and tenderness. Piano notes that fell like a gentle rain and a full bass line completed the emotional moment this tune conjured.

Some songs from last night's show were just pure joy to hear from a live band. AfterFab masterfully maneuvered the shifting tempos on McCartney's "Another Day" before serving up some hand clapping joy with Lennon's "Power To The People." The band powered forth on Harrison's "What Is Life" with its abundance of happy melody.

The band played McCartney's faux disco song "Coming Up" with an infectious beat and endearing melodies. "Maybe I'm Amazed" came off very well and "Jet" was rocking fun.



I don't know how Paquin pulled it off, but he sang "Imagine" better than I've ever heard anybody sing it before, and I've heard it sung many times over the last 30 years. He just captured the right pace, tone, and phrasing without falling into imitation. He was impressive on "Band On The Run" too, which was marked by an explosion of guitar, keyboards, and everything else during the song's first grand transition to another of its sections.

AfterFab is onto something special. They could continue playing at performing art center's like the one last night in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. They could also play out as a cover band, hitting that circuit as they offer popular songs from the 1970s and 1980s, including a few slower songs that couples could dance to. I see this band winning many fans and earning a lot of greenbacks.

<http://afterfab.com/>

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