



Live Review, The Green Note, London, July 18 2018

<https://americana-uk.com/i-see-hawks-in-la-the-green-note-london-19th-july-2018>

I See Hawks In LA opened their extensive UK tour with this sold out performance at London's Green Note, and were in fine form. Playing as a four piece and "acoustic" with Paul Lacques on lead guitar, Victoria Jacobs on snare drum and tiny cymbal, Rob Waller on guitar and lead vocals and Paul Marshall the one exception to the acoustic rule by playing electric bass. They began their first set with a song that really tells you all you need to know about I See Hawks In LA – 'Raised by Hippies'.

It's a celebration of a woman who was born on an old school bus after the Summer Of Love, and who, despite going out into the world when older, is never broken down by the constraints of the world to abandon a faith in what's important in life – people, love, caring. Sounds heavy – but it isn't; it's beautifully crafted, like all I See Hawks In LA songs, there's a common clinging to a world view that is about more than greed and spite. And if there's something wrong with that then we'll need a written counter-argument with diagrams. It's not a naive song – Rob Waller acknowledges that the parents "*did some things wrong*" before adding "*but they raised their children right / and they did it for a song*". It's a sentiment that reappears on 'Tearing me in too' which Rob wryly introduces as being about those feelings "*when you're out on the road playing music – but you miss your family, although sometimes you're with your children and....you really want to be playing music.*" The eternal dichotomy of dual loves. It's a song, like many others, that is taken from the band's new album 'Live and Never Learn' – which is another excellent collection.

All through the set Paul Lacques adds wonderful guitar solos that lift lightly from the ground, whilst Paul Marshall keeps everything grounded with his discretely interjecting bass and Victoria Jacobs performs literal miracles of brushed drumming with her instrument – one can't really raise a single snare to the heady heights of being a drum kit. Despite all this, there are occasional claims in the first set of moments of synchronised jet lag – the Hawks had only landed in the UK the day before – and these claims are repeated in the interval as the band hang-out and chat relaxedly with the audience. But if this is truly I See Hawks In LA slightly sub-par then no-one but the band could tell. The first set had slipped by in a dreamy flash, with a glorious 'I Fell in Love with the Grateful Dead' closing it out. It's a great song of a Dead-Head's adventures, taking to the trail and following Gerry and the band across the States and on to Europe. It's not nostalgia – it's just the retelling of a great musical quest, vegetarian food and the bonds of friendship in a loose community.

There's a similar feeling of a happy retelling on '*Good and Foolish Times*' which jounces along like a battered vehicle driven just a little too fast down a dusty side road as Rob Waller sings "Didn't we have some good times ? / some good and foolish times ? / Didn't we have some good and foolish times ? / Didn't we take some long rides / some long and winding rides?" and the band harmonise behind him.

The second set was geared a little more towards the higher tempo and rocky reaches of I See Hawks In LA output. '*Humboldt*' is a road trip for not strictly legal purposes song which pounds along down the freeways with Paul Laques' guitar just burning higher and higher. If this was a fist-pumping audience then fists would have been pumped. There's a swinging '*Live and Never Learn*' which beats along like a train down a track whilst pointing out how unlikely it is that unthinking and foolish behaviour will ever stop being foolish and unthinking. Ultimately the futility is self-deprecatingly spelt out: "every slight, every way I treated her unkind, every promise I knew I'd break, every friend looks the other way, every leap I never took".

In the first set '*California Country*' had been virtually a description of the sound of I See Hawks In LA – there's country in the mix but it's really country influenced rock, steering tonight towards an acoustic set from that inspiring band The Grateful Dead. There's the same kind of mix of lyrical wonder and the really small parts of life that are maybe the most important parts as well. It's not, though, the totality of their sound – Paul Marshall took lead vocal duties for a straight country ballad '*Truth is – you lied*' whilst Rob and Victoria take call and response turns to tell the story of a bad car crash on the folky meets soul '*My parka*'. This is a song that gets laughs – especially when Rob Waller's fantasy that the liquor store owning drunk driver who hit Victoria Jacobs is struck with remorse and hands out free booze to her "all through high school." This is slapped down with "hey Bob, that never happened." This, though, is not the heart of the song, amusing as it is, but this is the true nugget: "my parents came to the Emergency Room and when they took my parka off chunks of glass fell out onto the floor / and my Dad burst into tears...and that's when I knew he loved me." Heart and family.

Wry humour, great music, unabashed joy of living, lovely harmony singing, foolishness, environmental concerns and the hazards of love – the upsides and the downsides of caring about someone. That's what a couple of hours in the company of I See Hawks In LA is about. They have a long road ahead of them in July and August; it's doubtful if they'll reach the end with any T-Shirts or CDs left; they may even be a bit more battered – but triumphant as well. There is surely no better time to get out and see I See Hawks In LA.

-- Jonathan Aird



I SEE HAWKS IN LA @KITCHEN GARDEN CAFE, BIRMINGHAM By Andy Thorley July 30, 2018

<http://www.maximumvolumemusic.com/i-see-hawks-in-la-kitchen-garden-cafe-birmingham-30-07-2018/>



It's not often you leave a gig in the light, but the early finish tonight means it just about is here. And somehow that's entirely in keeping with the chilled, sunny, summer vibe when I See Hawks In LA played.

There is no edge at all to the quartet. No friction and it seems that they are all enjoying this as much as their audience. There is a very real possibility that these songs are their catharsis, given that they've all had their personal troubles, but this is as genuinely lovely as 80 minutes gets.

Starting with "Turn That Airplane Around" – one of the first songs they ever wrote, is a perfect example of what they do. Harmonies that belong right on their West Coast home, but with a country heart, and as Rob Waller points out after it is played, it was written on the way home from his grandmother's funeral.

That juxtaposition is at the centre of what they do, and is right there on their wonderful

new record, “Live And Never Learn”. There’s a couple of them aired early on, “Poour Me” (their spelling) and the title track are as superb as they are on that.

And, whilst Waller is the avuncular frontman in the truckers’ hat and the deep voice, the rest of the band are quite obviously brilliant musicians to match him. Bass player Paul Marshall sings a couple – the pick of them the jazzy cover “St. James’ Infirmary Blues” – drummer Victoria Jacobs has her moment on “Open Door” and her husband, founding member Paul Jacques offers a brilliant Cajun traditional tune that was played at their wedding. Indeed, he was in fine form all night, his guitar was often a highlight, but never more so than on “White Cross” where his solo was magnificent.

“...Learn” is their eighth album and is a prime example of the fact that the way they look at things is through a slightly different prism to everyone else. “Ballad For The Trees” – the album’s highlight, is top of the shop here too, “Planet Earth” deals with the difficulties of the modern world as only they can and who else but I See Hawks would have a song about wildfires forcing you out of your home and make it riotous and celebratory? No one, that’s who, but they do just that on the rock n roll “Last Man In Tujunga” (and Paul Marshall is back in his home now too).

A show that rather pleasingly forgot the setlist in the second half – I know this because I could see the setlist that was meant to be played – seemed to crackle with spontaneity, and while the closing “Good And Foolish Times” would have been a neat way to finish, everyone deserved one more. “Grapevine” provided it in style.

So, whilst its not normal that a gig ends while it’s still light (I am old, I value an early night, all gigs should end at 9.20 in my opinion....) it is even rarer that you see one this purely enjoyable.