

FATEA

Merry Hell + Jameson + Moxie

Venue: Liverpool Acoustic
Town: View 2 Gallery, Liverpool
Date: 24/01/14

Website: <http://www.merryhell.co.uk>

"Sunshine On A Rainy Day" was the title of Zoe's 1991 hit single. It is also an apt description for tonight's events put on by Liverpool Acoustic in the congenial surroundings of the View 2 Gallery. Outside the raining was teeming down and even the Mathew Street buskers had taken shelter but inside the Gallery the audience basked in the warm glow of some fantastic music from the ever-wonderful Merry Hell. As if this was not enough, we also had a stunning solo performance by Californian singer-songwriter Jameson and a promising set from Liverpool's home grown talent, the band Moxie.

By the end of tonight's show, the "Blue Monday" blues had been well and truly banished and replaced with a feeling of "June in January".

First off were Liverpool-based band Moxie who are fronted by singer/guitarist Jazamin Sinclair [who is also a talented artist] and lead guitarist Lee Oxtan, who were joined tonight by three backing vocalists [sorry, I don't know your names]. Moxie have an original sound which blends post-punk attitude with haunting vocals and pithy lyrics in an acoustic setting. I particularly enjoyed "Cotton Wool" with its unaccompanied vocal chorus, which allowed the singers full-reign. Other highlights were the biting lyrics of "Ten Years" ["Ten years of listening to the same excuses"] and Jazamin's vocal gymnastics on "Playing With Fire". Moxie ended their set with "Let's Dance" [not the Bowie song] with its sudden changes of tempo and flamenco influence. Moxie are currently making their first album and I will be interested to hear it on the strength of tonight's performance.

Next up was Californian singer-songwriter Jameson Burt, who performs under his first name only. With his long, flowing hair, Jameson looks the epitome of West Coast cool but there is a great deal more to him than his appearance. He is a performer of great power and intensity with an amazing vocal range which goes from falsetto through to a deep, rasping growl, which reminds me of Family's Roger Chapman. Tonight Jameson was celebrating the release of his new six track EP called "Pronto". Right from the start of his set it was clear that here was a highly talented singer and songwriter. His vocals on the chilling "Bourbon", about the evils of alcohol, were extraordinary, a fact that the audience were not slow to recognise. Jameson's amazing vocal range was clearly evident on the haunting blues number "Let You Be" from "Pronto", where he went from the proverbial whisper to a scream.

As well as playing rhythmic, bluesy acoustic guitar, Jameson is also a fine banjo player, as he demonstrated on "Liar" and "Surprise", both from the EP [which I would not hesitate to recommend]. Jameson is a stunning performer and he left the stage [or, more accurately, the performance area] to rapturous applause from the audience who were well impressed. Liverpool Acoustic audiences know a good thing when they hear one.



I was really looking forward to seeing Merry Hell, having seen them at Chester Folk Festival last summer and been blown away by them. Their superb album "Head Full Of Magic, Shoes Full Of Rain" [a very appropriate title for today] was one of my top three albums of 2013 and they are, quite simply, one of my favourite bands.

Tonight, due to the somewhat limited dimensions of the "performance area" we had the slimmed down, acoustic version of Merry Hell rather than the full-blown seven-piece electric band. Tonight's line-up consisted of the following members of the Kettle family- Andrew and Virginia [vocals], John [guitar] and Bob [mandolin]. Joining them, for the first time, on electric bass, was new recruit Nick. You would never have guessed that this was his first time playing live with the band, so well did he fit in.

It is a well-established fact that if you see Merry Hell live, you will leave with a big grin on your face. Their music is rousing, joyous, uplifting and totally infectious and probably contagious [in a good way, of course].

Dancing is not something that always goes on at Liverpool Acoustic but it certainly does when Merry Hell play there. The sight of Le Patron Ken jiving with Jazamin of Moxie is something that I will not forget in a hurry!

Merry Hell favourites including "This Time", "Let's Not Have A Morning After", "Bury Me Naked", "Drunken Serenade" and "Finest Hour" all had the audience either up on their feet and/or clapping along and/or singing along.

As well as their stirring anthems, Merry Hell also have a quieter, more introspective side with superb songs such as Virginia's touching "Emerald Green", Bob's romantic "I Never Loved Anybody Like I Love You" and John's tender "Lean On Me Love", all of which were beautifully performed tonight.

For a richly deserved [not to say demanded] encore, Merry Hell played "Let The Music Speak" which contains the lines "We have come here for the atmosphere, To put a little rhythm in our blood". These words of Virginia's perfectly sum up a wonderful evening when the music did speak for itself most eloquently.

Another superb night at Liverpool Acoustic, courtesy of Graham Holland and Stuart Todd, not forgetting Ken. Thanks guys.

Peter Cowley
Photocredit Neil King (Not taken at gig)

