

A Month of Sundays at Sunday Session

Written by Nick

Tuesday, 01 February 2011 15:32 - Last Updated Tuesday, 15 February 2011 11:23

Last Sundays monthly session at the Retreat was I think one of the best yet, if you haven't been yet and are perhaps curious I'll see if I can paint a picture for you and maybe tempt you to come along next time.

A bitterly cold night and members of **A Month of Sundays** step in from the cold brushing the frost from their shoulders, stepping out of the dark and into the warmth of the pub carrying various items of amplification, equipment and instruments.

They deposit their kit in a great pile in the back bar once inside and, priorities recognised, pints are ordered. Very quickly a semi circle of AMOS guzzlers muster around the, gear pile, and a strategy of `set up` is launched.

Like a well oiled military operation, equipment is heaved and struggled into place, cables run out whilst speaker cabinets are made stable and the One Twoing, One Twoing of sound checking is completed, after the ritual of Marcus`s extraordinary mimicked tap drip, the signal (to those who must know) that all is well on the audio front and the evening can progress.

Colin makes his first security rounds of the evening.

Band assembled and audience settled AMOS kick the night off with `Heart beat like a hammer` a gutsy blues number with screaming harmonica and distorted bottleneck guitar thrashing that helps to exorcise any thoughts of the miserable coldness outside and sends all winter demons scampering for the exit. Winter devils banished, some summery Tamla Motown is strummed and crooned and a short introductory set is capped with the Drifters `How sweet it is`.

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The floor is now open to performers.

Colin takes another security patrol, and as he passes no one dares to catch his eye, he's on duty.

Next up is Gordon from Malvern, a folk circuit stalwart who delivers his well researched tales and ballads of the common man from both sides of the Atlantic from the deepest vocal register with the choicest plucking of a classical spanish guitar to accompany.

Alex takes up the the baton and delivers some great guitar playing and singing, finishing with a John Prine number and making it sound like it was written yesterday. Cracking stuff, and the room by now is pretty much full, interestingly, at the back of the audience a table of good looking young Russians toss back cocktail after cocktail and give intermittent gutsy responses to songs that are familiar to them. Trays of roast spuds arrive and whilst being enthusiastically despatched by listeners and players alike a brief breather is taken and glasses re-charged.

Colin dilligently marches through on his security tour, its part of his remit to make sure there are no spilled pieces of potato on the floor..... after all, someone could slip?

Next up its Maggie from Stourbridge making her debut singing performance, she gets possibly the loudest cheer of the night on finishing her Joni Mitchell song. Always the biggest and scariest step to take in performance, its great to have so many places of encouragment for first timers in Ledbury.

Steve accompanies and has bought along tonight a full electronic keyboard, accordian etc to add to the evenings proceedings. Beth gets a warm reception next with her Blue guitar and balladeering and then the evening enters its ensemble mode as Angie plugs in to play. Having refused the offer of chorus, distortion and echo guitar effects from an engineer, she is joined by percussion, mandolin, keyboards and violin for her performance which moves the Russians into rapture and indeed the whole room to enthusiastic applause.

The ensemble now swells as another guitar and more percussion enlist for some brilliant reel

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playing from Fiddlers Two. Like a kind of small folk orchestra the fiddle led melodies scorch the ears as this well rehearsed tight little outfit go through some fine English and Irish melodies and are probably responsible (it has to be said Ben!) for an outbreak of dancing, yes, dancing in the general area of the Russian table.

Colin restores order with an icy stare as he saunters through, he doesn't stand for frivolity on his watch.

Mark then delivers a haunting tale of Jacobites from the mists of yore and, although lots of people prefer a night without amplification, the enhanced beat of his bodhran cuts through the room and punches the chest gently as he sings and with the heartbeat still echoing. He finishes with a penny whistle number as he is, of course, the Jimi Hendrix of the whistle tune. More Russian rapture ensues!

So its back again for A Month of Sundays and time is running out fast so Taj Mahals `Katy` is delivered with Two guitar solos and a harmonica break. Then it's Joe Walsh`s `Rocky mountain way` to close and general outbreak of dancing, jiggling and cheering results, not just for AMOS but I think in appreciation of everybodies contribution to a great Sunday night!

Colin is not so impressed, life as a private security guy is hard enough for a Staffordshire bull terrier without this extra worry. Anyway, job done, he can now relax, have a swift beer and take his human home, got proper work in the morning..... Human walking.

Sincere apologies if I forgot to mention anyone!

Next Sunday session is scheduled for Sunday 27th of February, starts at 8.30 ish. Try to come early if you're coming as we have to finish the music at Eleven sharp because of licence restrictions etc so get as much music as you can. AND you only get to play if you want to NOBODY is hassled to perform!!!