

Jukes News from Abroad
By Maggie Powell, European Correspondent

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So what is it about the Jukes that can entice several hundred people from the coziness of their homes to a dot-on-the-map (albeit a very nice dot) on a foggy, almost Halloween night, in lower, Lower Saxony, Germany, huh?



Well, the short answer to the above question lies with Volker König, the show promoter who has been bringing the Jukes in various formats to Melle for the last few years, and whose efforts are much appreciated by those of us not able to see the band play on their home turf.

The longer, slightly more complex answer, I guess, goes back to the days when the Jukes established themselves as the greatest bar band in the world. Quite a reputation to live up to, but as anyone who has had any association with the band will tell you, the Jukes are, quite simply, the essence of live music... it's all there... the spontaneity, the talent (collective and individual), the interaction on stage, and most of all, the undeniable passion for what they do.

And that's why there was a sudden in-flux of like-minded people gathered in Melle, on Thursday, October 29th, eagerly awaiting the opening night of the 2009 Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes' European Tour.

For drivers of large-ish vehicles, it's worth noting that the approach to the venue is very picturesque and that Neuer Graben is wide enough for the Jukes' bus. Just. As I drew near, Johnny was also just arriving so we had a quick chat and, as I went off to park, I smiled as I realised that I had "Grapefruit Moon" playing in my car – maybe I need to try this tactic more often and see if any of my other favourite performers pop up magically like this!

But before I talk about the show, let me tell you a little bit about the deco inside the Honerkamps Ballsaal... imagine a fairly standard large hall, stage at one end, bar at the other, sound board two-thirds of the way back... overlooking this setting, there is a 10-section frieze which gives an illusion of there being an upper gallery. Now, this mural is very clever and depicts lots of well-known local people some of whom are current König family members but the section (above the bar coincidentally) features... Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes! Yes, I did a head-count and they're all there: Johnny, Bobby, Eddie, Joey, Chris, Joe, Jeff, John, Neal aaaaaaaaand last but certainly not least, Hood, Prinzo and Paul (the merch man) too... cool or what?!?



"What the hell are you doing out there? Anyone wanna go home?" enquired Johnny before Happy turned up the heat on this otherwise chilly autumn night. Shakers tossed aimlessly and subbed by a harp, I Played The Fool continued. Coming up for air, Johnny made apologies for Eddie and Bobby and without missing a beat, Jeff played the opening bars of 10th Avenue

Freeze Out as an accompaniment – Eddie was mia because he was part of the horn section in Bruce’s band at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 25 Year Anniversary bash at Madison Square Garden; Bobby, on the other hand, was on Bon Jovi duty which meant that we had the pleasure of seeing/hearing Fender-bender, Glenn Alexander! And let me tell you something about Glenn... he was at Jukestock as part of Mark Pender’s Band and La Bamba’s BIG Band. So yes, I confess... I was wearing my Cheers of Long Branch promo shirt for “Bandiera” circa ’92, but Glenn, you rocked and it was great to see you again.

At this point, I have another confession... I tried to keep a set list and everything was going well until... I tried to read my notes back! Hmmm... clearly my eyesight is past the stage of writing in the dark so I will do my best to recall as much as I can based on the unintelligible garblish on my note pad.

The songs I have been able to read are:

Coming Back, Gin Soaked Boy, Talk To Me, Into The Harbour, Joey’s Song (aka Walk Away Renée), Cadillac Jack’s No 1 Son, Love On The Wrong Side Of Town, The Fever, Living With The Blues, You’re My Girl, This Time Baby’s Gone For Good, I Don’t Want To Go Home, It’s Been A Long Time, Better Days

Encore: Tired Skin, Down, Down, Down, I’ve Been Working Too Hard

The temperature in the hall just kept rising while we were treated to all of the above plus a few more, the titles of which will have to remain a mystery unless someone more diligent than me was also taking notes. And yes, all the trademark solos were there - the roll-roll-roll-clap hand-jivin’ routine from the horns – the tips of Joe’s drums sticks resembled a strobe light they were moving so fast (btw, I loved the black leather gloves Joe!) – the incredible harp moments from Johnny as well as his unique soulfulness... it’s like every word he sings has been maxed-out on emotion – the JJG drum/bass/electric trio – Neal’s beautiful trombone solos – Chris’ masterpiece trumpet playing on The Fever and Tired Skin and the wonderful sounds he makes with the mute in place – Joey on Renée, which is always a highlight for me, as are Jeff’s keyboard skills which add depth and feeling with every note he plays – and of course, if Johnny was to be believed, the guys in the band apparently didn’t know what planet they were on because of the fact that they’d had zero acclimatisation time... from my new official favourite place to be at a Jukes gig i.e. right behind Joe Prinzo at the board, the guys in the band sounded very definitely on to me!

It was a fabulously mixed show, technically and musically, leaning a little more in the blues direction overall, I’d say. It never fails to amaze me how much energy these guys have as well as the way they manage to perform every song like it was the first time. I can safely say that nobody wanted to go home, even when “Baby, baby, baby... goodnight!” signaled the end of the show, and the start of the next leg of the 2009 Euro-journey for Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes.

As per what is now deemed normal the band came back out to sign autographs, something which works two ways, as it gives the fans a chance to say “thank you”. From my side, I honestly don’t know how many Jukes’ shows I’ve seen over the years, definitely not enough, but I do know that it is soooooo

cool to have them play in what is effectively my backyard. Thanks for sending them Bill, thanks for having them Volker, and thanks for Coming Back again to Melle, Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes – have a great rest-of-the-tour!

The logo for the Asbury Jukes, featuring the band's name in a stylized, cursive, dark blue font. The word "Asbury" is on the top line and "Jukes" is on the bottom line, with a thick, dark blue horizontal bar underneath the word "Jukes".