

Wookalily



Now and then a band appears which seems to defy any definition by genre. On Friday 26th May I was lucky enough to catch the second set of one such band, the Belfast five woman outfit *Wookalily* in the Gallery Bar of the Ardhoven Theatre. (For those curious about their name, the urban dictionary refers to "wooka" as meaning "very sexy woman", and "Lily" coincidentally was the name of several band members' grannies!)

Hard to define their unique quirky sound, it's a mixture of Folk and Country Blues, with walking blues speeded up to a run. In fact, this band's verve and at times raucous enthusiasm would easily get people up and dancing in an appropriate venue.

Adele Ingram is the main lyricist for the band; Sharon Morgan plays lead guitar, banjo, and bass and is responsible for designing and painting the cover of the bands debut album *All the Waiting While*; Lou Potter plays the drums with energy and panache; Clair McGreevy also plays lead guitar, fiddle, and flute, with haunting Irish traditional influences; and last, but certainly not least, lead vocalist Lyndsay Crothers creates a soulful blues sound. Her version of the Ruthie Foster song *Travellin Shoes* brought me to my feet it was so rousing, elemental and powerful:

*Death came a-knockin' on my sister's door
Singin' "Come on, sister, ain't ya ready to go?"
And my sister stooped down, buckled up her shoes
And she moved on down by the Jordan stream.
And then she shout
"Hallelujah! Done, done my duty!
Got on my travelin' shoes."*

In the week that saw the horrendous suicide bomb in Manchester Arena happen, the choice of this song and Lyndsay's soulful rendition seemed heartachingly apt.

Some of Wookalily's impressive back story:

2011: Wookalily release their debut EP *Black Magic Doll*.

2012: Their song *Diamonds And Gold'* gains them a showcase at the prestigious IBMA World of Bluegrass Festival in Nashville.

2013: They record for Country Music Hall-Of-Famer Dixie Hall's *Pickin' Like A Girl* compilation – the only non-American band to do so.

November 2014: Their own debut album *All The Waiting While* is released.

2016: They are scouted by Warner Bros Wall to Wall Productions for a BBC4 documentary featuring Midge Ure and Rhod Gilbert and make it to the NATIONS final.

All The Waiting While is getting not only well earned local airplay but also international acclaim.

Wookalily are a cult, but they'd like to be popular!

Just one of the twelve superb tracks on Wookalily's CD *All the Waiting While, Diamonds and Gold* is an enchanting ballad describing the value of true love:

*I'm not looking for diamonds or gold
just a lover for my trouble and no trouble for my soul
no more to be like the raging sea*

and this love is liberating, a homecoming, unshackled by mercenary concerns:

*I'm not lookin for a mansion on a hill
your heart is my home
take me where you will
with you I feel free
shack, shanty, or tepee*

Listening to *All the Waiting While* is like making a bunch of really good new friends after a period of drought and get even better with further acquaintance. However, as good as the CD is it doesn't match "Wookalily" live and wild as they are. This band of women give you a taste of unfettered freedom which is as infectious as it gets.

Catch them if you can!

Kathy May