

# Foghat Tribute for Sound Archive At Library Is a Roaring Success

The Foghat Blues Tribute, a three-hour blues extravaganza for the benefit of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archive of Recorded Sound at the New York Public Library, was a roaring success because it found the right balance between the freewheeling atmosphere that makes for good blues performances and the forethought necessary to stave off anarchy. Conceived by the members of the English rock group Foghat to help the library build and catalogue a permanent blues collection, the tribute was a doubly happy event because it introduced the young audience at the Palladium on Friday to several bluesmen who are better known among musicians than to the general public.

Foghat, which is an energetic but only moderately interesting rock and boogie band under normal circumstances, opened the show with a short, supercharged electric blues set. Dave Peverett's vocals were right on the mark, especially on a version of Elmore James's "It Hurts Me, Too" which featured slashing slide guitar from Rod Price. Foghat should play more blues; they play it much better than a number of better-known English and American bands.

Eddie Kirkland, their first guest, was a hard act to follow. Playing his guitar while dancing, doing splits, rolling on the floor and even somersaulting and singing in an intense Delta whine, Mr. Kirkland was simply overwhelming. Such showmanship has traditionally been an important aspect of blues performances, and the atmosphere at the Foghat concert was loose enough for it to create the requisite amount of hysteria.

David (Honeyboy) Edwards, a Mississippi bluesman who traveled with the legendary Robert Johnson, seemed intimidated by the large, rowdy crowd, but he found his stride on a hypnotic, signifying version of "Catfish Blues." His performances in the styles of Charley Patton and Robert Johnson were masterful re-creations—he is, perhaps, the only bluesman alive who can still capture the essence of these two founding fathers of Delta blues—but their impact was largely lost on the audience.

Otis Blackwell, the rock-and-roll songwriter, went over better. It is ludicrous to assert, as some have, that Elvis Presley copied his style from Mr. Blackwell's demonstration records of original songs such as "Don't Be Cruel." Presley's style was already formed on his early Sun recordings, several years before he heard Mr. Blackwell. What this paradigm of rock-and-roll songwriting does possess is a classic rock-and-roll singing style, and with Foghat behind him, he turned in a riveting set.

John Lee Hooker's segment was marred by an overbusy guitarist with psychedelic leanings. With the aid of several members of Foghat, Mr. Hooker did get a mesmerizing boogie going, and he came back to share a song with Foghat and Paul Butterfield that was a better representation of his powers.

Johnny Winter appeared with the Muddy Waters band and did two lengthy medium-tempo blues. He is perhaps the only white bluesman whose singing is more authentic-sounding than his guitar playing, because while he is a gritty and idiomatic vocalist, his guitar solos almost invariably degenerate into rococo noodling. The Waters band did restrain many of his more self-indulgent tendencies, but it was only when Mr. Waters himself came on stage that the performance shifted into high gear.

Though he is old enough to rest on his laurels and has taken to performing an almost unvarying set of favorites, Mr. Waters always manages to create a special sort of intensity. The combination of his powerful voice, repetitive one-chord songs and starkly repetitive instrumental patterns makes for a mood that is the essence of the blues.

Predictably, Mr. Waters's "Mannish Boy," done in an unusually deliberate and assertive manner, was the high point of the concert. His last two numbers brought most of the guest performers on stage, and when Foghat's musicians joined them, the Palladium seemed about to explode from the sound of electric guitars and screaming fans. Predictions that the blues is coming back have seemed fanciful before, but after a concert like the Foghat Blues Tribute, one was almost inclined to believe them.

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