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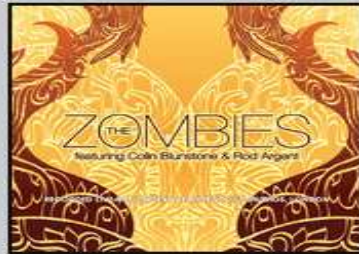
[Music blog]

<http://top100canadianblog.blogspot.ca/2012/07/music-review-zombies-in-concert-at.html>



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MUSIC REVIEW: THE ZOMBIES - IN CONCERT AT METROPOLIS STUDIOS



Hey, zombies are hot right now, aren't they? Well, these guys won't rip your face off, but they are more popular than they've been in years. Celebrating 50 years since their formation, the group recorded this live DVD-CD combo at a new British venue called Metropolis Studios. The small hall is set up specifically for live recordings, with a small, 120-person invited audience. The 2011 recording is one of several being released in similar sets, invited 60's and 70's U.K. favourites still treading the boards. Other releases include Bill Nelson, Barclay James Harvest, Caravan and Roy Harper. Although these groups might have a few fans over here, clearly the biggest name is The Zombies.

The original, 60's incarnation of the group had a funny career, very much hit-or-miss. Most people will know big hits Time Of The Season and She's Not There, and some will at least recognize Tell Her No. But almost everything else the group put out through the mid-60's was a flop, here and at home. Keyboard player and songwriter Rod Argent had a huge hit with Hold Your Head Up in the 70's, and lead singer Colin Blunstone managed a few British Top 40's, but that was it for years. Then, a new generation of musicians, including Paul Weller, started talking about the group's final album, Odessey (sic.) & Oracle (the group was at such a low point, the graphic designer misspelled the title, and nobody bothered to change it). Critics started listening too, and it became regarded as a classic. With the band hip again, a long-lasting reformation has occurred, although only Argent and Blunstone remain from the originals.

Of course, since they were pretty much faceless anyway, it doesn't matter that we only have a two-fifths reunion, especially with Blunstone's voice and Argent's keys the signature sounds. And neither has lost a step. This small venue/studio is obviously a great space, as the band sounds wonderful, and the harmonies especially are brilliant. These lads are very well-preserved too, and there's a regal charm to it all, Blunstone a soft-spoken, sweet-singing type, the antithesis of the gnarled Rolling Stones. I don't know how many re-takes they might have done, but it's note-perfect, vocally and instrumentally, from start to finish.

Diving deep into the 60's albums, the centerpiece of the shows is a six-song suite of Odessey tracks, baroque-pop with an R 'n' B edge, somewhere between The Small Faces and The Troggs. It's dated a bit certainly, A Rose For Emily twee British musical hall at its root, but Beechwood Park is a pop gem, I Want Her, She Wants Me is tougher stuff, and of course Time Of The Season is a powerhouse. Elsewhere, the group chooses to dip into the solo years to fill out the set, with several of Blunstone's U.K. hits, including the strong and faithful Motown cover What Becomes Of the Broken Hearted. Argent gets his due too, with Hold Your Head Up still a great rave.

Yet the problem the band had in the 60's remains. Their catalogue is still too thin, without the requisite number of quality hits to fill up 90 minutes. A couple of brand-new tracks from a well-received 2011 album are good additions, especially I Do Believe, an Argent composition that sounds like it could have been a lost 1967 outtake. Yet it still feels like we're all waiting for She's Not There, the inevitable highlight. They do make the very best of what they have though.