

# VERITAS VAMPIRUS

## LEFT OF THE "LEFT" News from the Undead The *Rude*-imentary Truth

**JUSTIN HAYWARD** – *Live in Concert at the Capitol Theater* (2016 / IM3 Global) (DVD)

I perhaps controversially credit the Moody Blues with the most validatable initiation of progressive rock. This, among many things, has not endeared me to the progrock community I originally based in (decades past). Sure, my inky “compeers” make reasonable arguments that the Beatles (re: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* released in the same year as the Moodies' *Days of Future Passed*, 1967) - and Pink Floyd (re: the '67 *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*) - are the true genesis moments, depending on crit/fanboy biases, but the counter-polemic is simple: *Piper* was only partially prog (though Floyd would two years later issue a pinnacle statement in *Ummagumma*) and the Beatles never were a progrock band (even McCartney, who was far more into the avant-garde and such than Lennon, would blanch at the suggestion). More, *Sgt. Pepper's* wasn't even vaguely as progressive as *Days*, despite its monumental presence in the rock firmament. No, no, no, the Moody Blues are and were \*it\*...

...and Justin Hayward was and is undeniably the beating heart of that band. As with the subject of Jon Anderson re: Yes, one need merely listen to each member's solo LPs, and the case is made. Olias of Sunhollow revealed whose “voice” dominated. A master composer, singer, and player, the Hayward's been constantly active for a half century, so *Live in Concert at the Capitol Theater* is in many ways a quiet solo capstone to The Age Of The Moodies, as, despite his cheery announcement that the band is alive, well, and touring, the legacy, once one proceedsw past The Core Seven (start with *Days* and count forward), has been quite uneven on all counts...though quite acceptable to the ensemble's massive world-wide unflagging fan base.

*Live in Concert* is a very gratifying two hour (counting the 3 bonus tracks, incl. the video for “The Wind of Heaven”) review of many of the classic songs of the group as well as some of Justin's solo work – and, *doggone it!*, not one cut was included from my fave slab of his: *Songwriter*. The touring band's a threesome with Mike Dawes on rhythm and lead guitar and Julie Ragins on keyboards, perc., and b. vox. This DVD well demonstrates that Hayward's still at the top of his game, vocals as vibrant and fresh as in the farflung heydays, guitar work (all acoustic and mainly rhythm) flawless. Dawes puts in no end of scintillating top end solos and ornamentations while Ragins throws in airily stimulating keyboard patches and the treasured *ooohs* and *aaahs* so necessary to Moodies vocals: their presence in The Core Seven, especially in *Days*, still the ultimate such vocal work in all of rock, as haunting and wistfully beautiful as when debuted in '67 (and I sure as hell would like to know how Tony Clarke engineered such transcendently cosmic resonances).

The Capitol Theater venue is mid-sized and intimate, and it's obvious Boomers still idolize the gent, as well they should, beatific that he'd make a pointed stop in Clearwater, Florida. I personally discovered just how loving the fan base is whenever I reviewed the Moodies n *OpEdNews.com* - before its moron “ex”-Bircher Republican publisher, Rob Kall, kicked me out for being “too Leftist” – because I'd receive no end of compliments each time out...and well-intended corrections if was even one micron off the beam. Of all the reader feedback I ever got for my music or political articles, Moody Blues fans were the most prolific and appreciative. As seen here, the reason is not difficult to discern.

Back in the day, in junior high school, me and my buddy Jim, after capering all over town and doing things we probably shouldn't have been, would cool out in the evening by listening to Hendrix and Hayward & Co., drifting off into cosmic bliss long before either one of us ever tried drugs. And it was *Days of Future Past* and then Vanilla Fudge's *Renaissance* ('68) that got me hooked on prog, with King Crimson's '69 *In the Court of the Crimson King* nailing the infatuation down

irrevocably; I've been hopeless ever since. But the drug days indeed came, me an enthusiastic consumer (hey Bill C., I inhaled A LOT!), and the Moody quintet led the charge, issuing *non pareil* head music for the adventurous.

More, Hawthorne High School may have been the alma mater of the Beach Boys, but the artist and musician peeps I hung with were solid-core mellotrons-n-Moodies fanatix, and the fivesome's records were never far from a turntable among us stoners. This behavior continued for quite a while, well over a decade, more like two, almost three, but, as with the band itself, things changed, finally arriving at these dog days of the 2010s.

However, in my 50,000 recordings collection, the esteemed band is still among the 10 groups most often wafting through my speakers, and when I get dragged off either by angels or devils (I'm betting on the latter), one of the things I'll miss most will be their music. I ain't kiddin' one little bit, and if you're of the day, mindset, and attitude, this toned-down retrospective will be very very welcome indeed: tribute, remembrance, and covers gatherum all in one, something to help hark back to better times...

...oh, and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame can go fuck itself.

- Mark S. Tucker