

Comsat Angels - 02 Academy, Sheffield. 26-04-09

As I stood in the audience at this first concert of the original reformed Comsat Angels (Stephen Fellows, Kevin Bacon, Mik Glaisher and Andy Peake) in their hometown a thought ran through my mind: great music is great because it transcends its time. This is absolutely the case with the Comsats. Concentrating on repertoire from the first three albums (**Waiting for a Miracle**, **Sleep No More** and **Fiction**) it was as though the music is now, somehow, more appropriate than in the 1980's.

Starting with the evocative *Sleep No More*, segueing into the menacing *Be Brave*, it struck me that although the music originally came at the height of the potential nuclear crisis of the 1980's and Thatcherism, it also points-up - cuts-through might be a better term - the current global state of things and, particularly, the increasing paranoia of the politically-correct, Labour vision of the UK.

The portentous atmosphere continued with songs from **Waiting for a Miracle**, climaxing with the effective hammered keyboard chords of *Postcard* and the angular dissonant guitar bends of *Missing in Action*. 'Live', I got a real sense of the melancholia lingering in the Minor 3rd intervallic background of the songs from the first two albums. One can't help wondering if the songs had been written with the present in mind. *Gone*, from **Sleep No More**, was powerful with its striking personal overtones and the melodic *Pictures*, from **Fiction**, (this was the first time the band had played it live), dealt with deep recesses of memory.

After whipping-through the set Stephen Fellows was heard to say 'It's over! It seems like it's only lasted about two minutes!' Thankfully, the band were returned for two encores, with the audience of 800 or so treated to *Our Secret* and *Eye Dance*.

It's always been my feeling that noteworthy musicians are more often than not overlooked by mass contemporary audiences. Attuned more to the fickleness of passing fashions and mediocrity, listeners are prone to miss the finer details of significant art. Whereas the U2's of this world have continued to churn-out music dictated by prevailing cultural mass taste, the Comsat Angels have ploughed their own creative furrow for thirty years. As a result, their single-mindedness is about to achieve Velvet Underground-like cult status. This is certainly true of guitarist/vocalist/writer Stephen Fellows whose gift for the visionary was fully revealed at the Sheffield 02.

The Comsats are performing a further three concerts this October in London, Manchester and Glasgow. Whatever you do, do not miss them!

Andrew Keeling - 27-04-09

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