

## **Show Review**

**Gary U.S. Bonds & The Roadhouse Rockers**  
**The Talbot, Tregaron, United Kingdom**  
**Fri. 8 October 2004**

Forty-plus years ago, I had one of those pre-transistor battery portable radios, in tasteful two-tone blue and grey, with a lid that acted as the aerial when you opened it up ... you had to get the thing pointing in just the right direction in order to achieve half-decent reception, and then, if you were lucky, through the late-night static, Radio Luxembourg would be playing 'Quarter to Three' or 'New Orleans' by the exotic-sounding Gary U.S. Bonds. Boy, I loved those records, but it certainly never occurred to me at the time that I'd ever get to shake his hand, still less play a privileged part in hosting him and his marvellous full-tilt American band ... but, it all panned out that way, on a night that will surely register with all who were there as one of Cambria Arts' all-time high points.

On the penultimate night of their UK tour, promoting their splendid 'Back In 20' CD, Gary and the boys (and girls) were well and truly up for it - this was a SHOW in every sense of the word, finely honed and full of power, commitment and communication. For well in excess of two hours, they gave a non-stop performance of the kind that only a road-seasoned all-American outfit can, that swung from stomping roadhouse R'n'B to heart-wrenching soul ballads. Mark Leimbach (guitar), Hal B. Selzer (bass), Lance Stark (drums), Jim Wacker (keyboards), and Doug DeHays (sax), augmented by Gary's wife Laurie Anderson and daughter Laurie Jr. on glorious gospel-tinged backing vocals, simply oozed class and authority - Leimbach and DeHays, in particular, served up countless solos of distinction, while Selzer's solo showcase almost demolished the building.

As for the great man himself, Gary's knack of 'working' the audience, developed over a 45-year career and countless thousands of gigs, is an object lesson in charm and persuasion - he drew us all in, had us singing along, and conveyed a tangible flavour of the huge span of his career, and the legends he's met and collaborated with along the way, from Otis Redding to Springsteen, by way of Chuck Berry, Elvis, the Beatles, Little Richard ... you just know you're in the presence of the real deal. For a man in his mid-sixties, Gary's energy is boundless, and the range and power of his voice inspirational. From the above-mentioned early hits to great self-penned songs from the new CD like 'You Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks', via songs from his 1980s Springsteen-produced era like 'This Little Girl is Mine', and inspired covers of Ray Charles, Presley and Chuck Berry standards, the man is nothing less than a human jukebox ... standouts were Gary's touching version of Otis's 'Dreams to Remember' (last performed at the Talbot, in markedly contrasting style, by our friend Oh Susanna), and the breathtakingly moving 'Daddy's Come Home', which surely brought a tear or two to many an eye ...

Encores, in the shape of a roaring rock'n'roll medley and a climactic take on Delbert McClinton's 'Roll The Dice', brought this most memorable of Talbot nights to a thoroughly satisfying conclusion. The icing on the cake came the next morning, when the road manager confided to us that, in the unanimous opinion of Gary and the entire band, this had been in all respects the best night of their tour - due in no small part to the enthusiasm of you, the audience. So, like us, please feel free to give yourselves a little pat on the back. We all deserve it.

- The Caped Cruiser

Mark Pickthall's photographs of the gig can be viewed at:  
<http://www.lloydwalters.co.uk/ca//2004/music/thumb/thGar04.htm>

Celf Cambria Arts  
Bridgend House  
Llanddewi Brefi  
Tregaron  
Ceredigion SY25 6RL