

Expanded Akoustik Manning @ The Grove Inn, Leeds – Sat 25th July 2009



It was a sunny and still warm summer evening and arriving at The Grove there were people sitting outside drinking and chatting. Going inside and into the back room, one was faced with probably the smallest location for a gig that I've seen. The room was scarcely larger than a typical living room and the 8 piece band's equipment took up a good third of the space. As can be imagined the room was soon pretty packed and the band had to enter through the fire exit at the back. There was no stage as such, just a small platform across one corner where Kris Hudson-Lee on electric double bass and David Albone on a small percussion set had set up. On the other side of the fire exit Phil Wilkes had a single keyboard and squeezed in the middle somehow were Julie King and Kevin Currie on backing vocals and small shaky things. Finally, at the front were Dave Million and Guy Manning on guitars and Steve Dundon (on loan from Molly Bloom) on flute and saxophone.

This of course was the acoustic line-up, known as Akoustik Manning and it was interesting to see that Guy had chosen to showcase a selection of tracks from across all his 10 album history many of which had been seldom, if ever, played before. Starting off with an extended 'Silent Man', featuring short solos on keyboards, sax and guitar, the first of two sets continued with 'Margaret Montgomery', a cut down 'The View from my window' and 'Castaways'. Then came a series of seldom played tracks, featuring 'Tears in the Rain', 'In Swingtime', 'Night Voices' and one of my favourites of the evening 'The Night and The Devil', many introduced with short stories in Guy's inimitable way. The first set ended with an acoustic version of the ElektriK set classic 'Antares'.

Twenty minutes later after a quick cool off outside, the band were back for their second set. Starting out with some rare outings for 'The Mexico Line', 'Songs of Faith', 'The Candyman' and 'Stronger' before shifting to more familiar territory with the excellent vampire themed 'Valentine's Night' and acoustic favourite 'Clocks'. Surprise of the night and show finale was an outstanding acoustic rendition of the ElektriK Manning show stealer 'House on the Hill' from the Number 10 album, albeit cut down by necessity.

A short break by some of the band (Guy didn't actually leave the stage) and we were

treated to an encore of 'In my life' (dedicated to a newly engaged couple) and a rousing 'Lost in Play', which really got the packed room going.

The expanded Akoustik Manning set, is different from the Elektrik Manning set, but with tracks chosen and arranged to suit the acoustic environment and with an 8 piece line-up, it is still an extremely full sound that does more than justice to Guy's compositions.

Paul Allwood