

Moody Blues Tribute Takes The Show On The Road Bob Sammon

I'm used to strange phone calls from my friend Kathy Simpson down in Dayton. For example, there was that time when she had heard that UFOs had been sighted in the skies over a small airport south of that city and at three in the morning we went looking for them. A more recent call was a little more ordinary. This time she was looking for a place to stay. For her whole band.

KB, as I've called her since we worked together in an advertising agency in Centerville, Ohio many, many years ago, has been a friend and fellow performer since the first time I walked in on one of her shows in one of the classier local nightspots. Her strong vocals and great command of both piano and guitar earned her positive reviews when I was writing for a large metropolitan newspaper. Her warmth, her energy, her love of music and her humor have endeared her to me for more than forty years. So I listened carefully as she explained.

"I'm in a new band," Kathy said. "We're a Moody Blues tribute band and we're going to be playing the Winchester Music Hall at the end of August. We're looking for places to stay."



Days Of Future Passed is the band and, according to founding member and leader of the group, Layne Loxley, they "recreate the sound and spirit of the original recordings" of the legendary British group. This particular opus, dubbed the "Isn't Life Strange Tour" focuses on the "Seventh Sojourn" album but is much more than that.

"The show is an overview of the Moody Blues from 1967 to 1999," says Loxley, "and we usually incorporate at least one song from every studio album in the set including a few songs which haven't been played live in many years."

Along with KB on keyboard and guitar and Loxley on keyboard, the group is rounded out by Gary Hill on guitar, Ron White on bass, and Don Blakely on percussion. They all have a special connection to the music they are performing in the current show.

Gary Hill sums up why he is part of this tribute simply. "Majestic sound, sincere vocals, lush orchestration, memorable melodies, thought provoking lyrics, mixed with rocking and driving electric and acoustic guitar. Other groups did it later. They did it first."

Some of that sentiment is echoed in KB's words. "The music has many layers, combines different styles of music, and incorporates a wide variety of instrumentation. Plus, very few of the Moody's songs follow what you would call 'typical' song construction."

Don Blakely reminds me, "Many of their melodies are timeless. People will always remember the songs 'Nights In White Satin' and 'The Story In Your Eyes'"

He also makes an important point about how Days Of Future Passed approaches the sound of such an iconic band. "We have tried to recreate the music as it was written. However, there may be a little room for interpretation. I believe people come to see a tribute band to hear the music as close as possible to the original artist."

Hill agrees. "There are a few instances of improvised solos, but mostly we stick to their original sounds and arrangements"

Judging from the press they have received in other towns they appear to be doing a great job in this respect.



Days Of Future Passed At Dayton's Legendary Canal Street Tavern

When I asked about how they feel about the upcoming show here in Cleveland, Loxley was the first to answer. "I'm looking forward to playing in Cleveland and playing in a highly respected venue such as the Winchester. Many of my favorite musicians have performed there including: Peter Hamill, Allan Holdsworth, and Adrian Belew."

KB added, "We're excited to play in Cleveland! Some of us have family and friends in the area and we're looking forward to 'coming home!'"

It seems that club owner Jim Mileti shares that enthusiasm. "The Winchester always presents the best musicians around," he said, "and you can include the Days Of Future Passed musicians in that category. I look forward to seeing their show for the first time after enjoying their music online."

At one point I asked about favorite Moody Blues songs and everyone had a little different take on the question.

Loxley: "I can't choose one, but I would say two favorites are 'Question' and 'My Song.' Those two have almost everything I could ask for in a piece of music."

Blakely: "I like the songs with orchestral arrangements that progress into dramatic music that also has a drive to it or segues into a driving rock song and back."

Hill: "'You and Me' is a fun song with a good message and a great guitar hook. Very difficult to pick a favorite."

KB: "I like so many of them for different reasons. I like playing the more popular Moody Blues songs because that's when you look out in the audience and see them singing along; really getting into it. That makes it all really worth it!"

She will be able to look out into the audience at the Winchester on August 31st and see me singing along with my favorites. The show starts at 9 PM and tickets are \$10 in advance by calling the club (216.226.5681) or at the door (12112 Madison Ave., Lakewood, OH.) In my experience the Winchester does really well in attracting good audiences for all manner of tribute bands. Advanced tickets might not be a bad idea. If you're too far from Cleveland to make this show you can check out the other tour dates at [the band's website](#). And if you'd like to check out the sound of this band you can [use this link](#) to get a feel for just how closely they honor the legacy of the Moody Blues.

Editor's Note: Ron White was not available for the interview.

[For more information on Bob, [check his website](#). Have something you'd like Bob to check out? Email him at upstream@whatsupohio.com]