

Long John Baldry in the Spotlight

By: Jethelo E. Cabilete

I talked to Long John Baldry the day after his show, at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, and the interview went smoothly. Sooo... presenting in the spotlight, Long John Baldry.

Brun: Okay to start things off, I went to the concert last night and I must say it was very enjoyable.

LJB: Thank you very much, we enjoyed it. It was, you know rough & ready & making it up as we went along cause it was utilizing some of the local guys and within a minutes rehearsal, they played just tremendously I thought.

Brun: It seems like the band didn't really have to rely on a lot of technical stuff; acoustic guitars, harmonica etc. is that what you normally play?

LJB: Well no, usually when I'm on stage I do the whole evening with the band and so its an unusual

thing for me to get the guitars out and play them. And of course I've been playing for a long time, but not much in recent years. So it was a treat for me and I hope for the audience.

Brun: You've been basically playing for about 35 or so years now, are there any favorite venues you like playing more than others; large concerts or intimate clubs?

LJB: 35 years in public, a bit longer than that actually; since I was a kid. But someone asked me that last night and its very difficult for me to ahh answer that. I mean there are so many cities the world over. I've enjoyed playing the Maritimes, coming here such a long time now & I guess it is a kind of second home for the Blues really; the Maritimes always has been: Halifax, Moncton, Fredericton, for example. I guess I'm very much a club performer because that's how I started out many years ago.

Brun: Where do you see yourself 10, 20 years from now?

LJB: Of course I'll be well into my 60's, but then again, B.B. King is still playing in his 60's, John Lee Hooker is 70 something and they still get out there & sing the blues, so why shouldn't I.

Brun: Over the years you've played with and influenced a lot of people like Eric Clapton, and discovered Elton John. Were there any of your own personal influences when you were starting out?

LJB: Well, most of the great classic black American artists influenced me. Tremendously over the years, and the first Blues

artist I ever heard, was Big Bill Brusey and shortly after that Muddy Waters. This was right at the beginning of the 50's, and then there have been a lot of Jazz singers that influences me also, so I guess I'm very much a ragbag at musical styles and its become my own after all these years. Anybody starting out as a musician tends to

for musicians now a days?

LJB: Well of course, there are a lot of musicians competing for a presence in the world of music now. Everybody wants to be in a band. This makes it tougher, although modern technology of course makes all the performing a lot easier. I can remember when I started out playing, most of the folk

most of the year doing the show in 1988 and I really loved it. But it's tremendous, a lot of work, because in most instances, in theatre, its 8 shows a week and you have to pull an element of discipline which maybe you don't need in Rock & Roll. If there was a venue large enough to stage it in the Maritimes, you may see us out here some-

time in the next couple of years.

Brun: Anything having to do with movies?

LJB: I'm looking at a few projects right now, but nothing definitive in the works. Who knows, one's life changes constantly.

Brun: Of all your performances, is there any one particular that stands out most in your mind?

LJB: There are many. I think the biggest crowd I performed for was in Minneapolis at the race way back in '71. That was 500,000 people there and that was a beautiful summer day. I really enjoyed that, a lot of fun. Another fabulous evening was an



copy what's gone before other people, but then you can't help developing your own style if you've been around as long as I have.

Brun: You've done Blues, R&B, Jazz a little bit of Rock and Roll, are there any other styles that you would like to try?

LJB: I have been listening to a tremendous amount of classical music since the advent of the CD. And maybe some of that is rubbing off on me in things I aim for on stage. Its possible because I listen to an enormous amount of stuff. As a kid I listened to classical music, because my father was very much into many different composers.

Brun: Was there any particular person or group that gave you a boost in your career?

LJB: Way back, of course I was part of the Folk scene in England, and started out playing acoustic blues. I fitted in to that folk music slot loosely and grew up around a lot of the Great British and American folk singers.

Brun: Are there any people that you haven't played with that you would like to?

LJB: Oh gosh, I don't think there's anybody on this planet that I haven't done stuff with; certainly a lot of British people I've worked with many times over the years apart from the Punk scene, and most American Blues singers. It would be nice to work with Ray Charles one day.

Brun: Over the years, the music industry has changed a lot. Is there anything different when you started out that is easier or harder

clubs didn't have microphones, and now its however many thousands of watts gets churned out the speakers. Instruments now are better in tune and kept in good condition.

Brun: You and the band really get into the music. What's the driving force behind how you play?

LJB: It's really what I do: what I have been doing for all those years, and I love what I do. I can't see me ever stopping, which gets back to your question, What am I going to be doing 10 years from now. I just really love what I do. Sometimes the getting from place to place to do a show can be very wearing on my nerves (I don't like flying).

Brun: When you play is it for the love of music?

LJB: Oh yes. I mean there are easier ways to make a living I assure you. Much easier. It's nice to get paid as well; be given a few free beers and such, but if ever I thought, oh I'm gonna do this to make a pile of dough, or whatever, it would never have worked. I just enjoy it too much to even think about money. But then the odd occasion when it hits me oh I've made so much, its a nice bonus but that's not the reason why I do what I do.

Brun: Besides music, you've also done radio and television shows, and some acting. Is there more to come from that?

LJB: Yeah, in fact I think I'll be reviving my role as Captain Hook in Peter Pan, within the next couple of years at some point. I had a lot of fun with that four years ago. I spent

evening with B.B. King in Memphis. Two or 3 years back, I've known B. for...oh gosh 25 years now, so it was enjoyable.

Brun: What does the Blues mean to you? LJB: the Blues is a feeling and it can really be an intense thing. It can be like getting socked in the jaw by a fist, or caressed lovingly. Yeah, its as much a feeling as a form of music that's for sure. The music is therapy itself.

Brun: You've been called a music legend by many people, what advice would you give to someone who is starting out in music?

LJB: Oh gosh, get a good lawyer get a good accountant. it all depends on the reasons for doing it. If its to make a lot of dough, of course you're going to have lawyers and accountants. Otherwise, you get screwed. If its something you want to do cause you're in love with it, just go out and do it because it really doesn't matter if you get screwed or not. If you love what you're doing that much, they can't take that away from you.

Brun: What are your plans for after tonight's show?

LJB: Well, I'm off to Toronto for a film narration, with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, then back to Vancouver to enjoy home. In October and November, a tour in Germany to celebrate the coming down of the Berlin Wall, with stops in Holland and England.

Brun: Well, thank you very much. It's been enjoyable and great.

LJB: Thank You.