

## Murray Bramwell's Reviews

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### **Joe Jackson**

with Joe Camilleri and Bakelite Radio

Thebarton Theatre

I've always thought of Joe Jackson as part of that triumvirate which also included Elvis Costello and Graham Parker. They were the Auden, Spender and MacNeice of the late seventies. Their lyrics mordantly capturing the spirit of the age just as Auden and his fellow poets had in the grim times of the 1930s. Costello wrote the dense punning lyrics, Parker burned with the gem-like flame, and Joe Jackson wrote smart infectious pop.

Jackson's career has been long and varied - pop singer to cabaret to chamber music composer and now, full circle, to the original Joe Jackson Band. With drummer Dave Houghton, guitarist Gary Sanford and bassist Graham Maby Jackson has got the band back together. And not just for a tour. The group has recently recorded *Volume Four*, a set of new songs named for the fact that, although Jackson has made umpteen albums, this is only the fourth with the old line-up.

For the Thebarton show, Joe Camilleri and his fellow Bakelite Radio members, guitarist Claude Carranza and bass player Steve Starr, open the proceedings with an excellent set featuring all the Jo Jo moves from *Poor Boy Blues* to *The Chosen One*. He gets a warm welcome and deservedly so. His return, with the Falcons, to the Gov late this month will be well worth catching.

Joe Jackson shows have a reputation for their finesse and quality. Many would rate his Night and Day and Big World gigs as among the best they've ever seen and that expectation is not disappointed with the Volume Four show. It is as neat as a pin. Just the four players, unlike the ten and twelve piece bands Jackson has travelled with before - and everything is well, ...sharp.

The top-spots spray down on Joe, curtaining out the rest of the band as he hits the keyboard for the signature bars of *Steppin' Out*. There are no high fretting notes from Graham Maby's bass - that is yet to come. Instead it is Jackson sweetly keening in a duet with those chiming piano chords. It is a beguiling start but this is not the Joe Jackson lounge act. For *One More*

Preprint by Murray Bramwell

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*Time* he is draped over the microphone for those old post-punk, beat crazy moves of Joe the Young Dog.

At not-quite fifty he is still unworldly looking - like Tin Tin, with a hint of Mr Squiggle. Tall and lanky and all angles in his dark frock coat, he capers with the band as they get into the groove.

Interspersing the very appealing new material - *Awkward Age*, *Bright Grey* and *Love at First Light* - are the Big Hits. *Fools in Love* sounds terrific with Houghton's thumping drum and Graham Maby's marvellously nimble, bony bass and the crowd does a bit of a gasp as Jackson segues into the Yardbirds' classic *For Your Love* before getting to that great punchline - I should know, this fool's in love with you. *Is She Really Going Out With Him* ? is given a sprightly, boppy reading before Jackson takes to the piano for some solos. It is all strong stuff - the splendidly melodic *Will You be My Number Two* ? A spine-tingling cover of Graham Parker's *You Can't be Too Strong* and a well-judged version of *Real Men*, a song that sounds more like a masterpiece every time you hear it.

More new material follows but it is the less distinguished *Dirty Martini* and *Dogs R Us*. Better instead, the vintage satire of *Sunday Papers* and *I Don't Wanna Be Like That*. The tempo is a tad slow - Sanford provides great power pop guitar but we want them to really let rip. This happens with *Got The Time* - ticking in your head ! Joe is jumping like a nutter and Maby is resplendent in a shaft of light for his famous solo. It is a great crest to finish on. The encores are suitably short and sweet. *Look Sharp* and *I'm a Man*, both delivered in the fast and furious (and wonderfully loud) style of their heyday. The usually introspective Jackson is looking pleased. He natters amiably to the crowd, the band is on song and it's a brand new day for Spiv rock, jumping jive and looking very sharp.