

# REVIEW – Police Dog Hogan at The Torphichen Inn

Well I started the night in a really bad mood, (children, who'd have them and children that won't do what they are told even worse.) so my drive out to Torphichen was fraught and not just with the winding roads and a feeling that we were never going to get there, but a very really sense of foreboding about what state our home would be in when we returned. (Children's revenge was a real worry, even with a great babysitter.)

Who would put on a gig out here? Admittedly it was dark and I am sure the beautiful country side was lost in the darkness, a bit like we were at that moment, but we kept going with one eye on the roads and another on the dashboard clock telling us that we were now late.

Our challenge tonight, set by The Edinburgh Reporter, "Go and check out this band with banjo's, fiddles and guitars, I'm sure you'll love them." So that was what we were doing. So it was with great relief that we finally parked up outside a very unassuming Inn on the village square of Torphichen.

I had had no time, thanks to my children to check out 'Police Dog Hogan', so no preconceived ideas, no set notion and in fact no idea what I was in for. So I was amazed when we were ushered into a fantastic, mini Grand Ole' Opera set, straight out of Nashville, full of excited and anticipation filled faces sitting in front of a well lit and full stage. I was really amazed! We took our seats beside quite a bunch; line dancers, music lovers, grannies out for the night, locals all united in a desire for a great night. Everyone was happy to speak and welcome "some new strangers" into their midst. I'll tell you more about the venue later, but for now we were ready for the band. Everyone was ready for the band.

And without further ado the band arrived and what a band it was. Seven piece and from what I could gather from the array of musical instruments on stage, seven piece multi-instrumentalists. There were banjos, two varieties, hand organs, guitars, a lot, bass, electric, acoustic and more, drums, percussion, mandolins and fiddles. This was promising to be a bit of fun and from the start of the first song – a mad number called Hard, it delivered what it promised. My bad mood vanished and I sat back into my seat with my newfound friends and let the band's take on "country" music take me to a happy place.

So what are 'Police Dog Hogan' all about. Just what I said; a seven piece, multi instrumental group from London, yes not London, Virginia, but London, London who deliver a great version of the more ironic aspect of good time country music. All delivered in a tight, well rehearsed and brilliantly presented package. I was loving this. I got all the jokes, though I'm pretty certain that the humour and wickedness of Crackington, a mad drug, surf, bop, and later their Pacific Whaling song called Maui, was lost on the hard core line dancers. But I got it, and I loved it.

They looked good and they played pretty good. (forgive him reader he is now in country mode! Ed) They will never work on the Nashville sound stage, but together they put on a fantastic show, playing off each other and enjoying the fun. James Studholme, the singer, is a long tall Londoner with a voice that would have made JC Mellencamp proud, played on his height as he stooped to interact with the diminutive lead guitar player. It was great fun.

The original songs kept coming; Officer Darling, a plea to a pretty police woman given after being pulled over for speeding, the sadder Hard and Shed, all rolled out interspersed with great patter and links.

I must admit though, that some of the heckles from the audience were fantastic and perhaps revealed the kind of

audience that they attract. They mentioned that they had never travelled into such a large 3G black spot, whereupon a voice from the audience piped up. "What's 3G?" It was a great first set, Yeah not the best solos and few mistakes that the musos amongst the audience might have picked up on, but together they sounded like the real deal and coupled with the great lyrics that really played on the best of country's wit, it worked really well.

The fantastic drum and bass combo that provided the heart and real beat of the band are worth a mention. The bassist, Adam Bennette, sat on a bar stool, playing great and authentic lines on a vintage 50's Gibson bass. Wearing the best Italian, Paisley patterned high-collared shirt, I have ever seen. His quiff and thick-rimmed glasses lent him an air of style. His partner in rhythm, drummer Michael Giri had just arrived from Woodstock. Long flowing silver locks, silk shirt, silk scarves and Cuban heels, looking fantastic and as my wife pointed out, "If he'd just get a decent haircut, he'd be a fine looking man!" I'm sure the line dancers noticed too. Together they were tight and on the mark for every song, a real talent.

They ended the first set, or Bad Boy Set as they called it, with Judgement Day, a darker and edgier number, and off they went to sell the usual "merch" and "specially for the more financially aware Scottish audience" i.e. mean, extra large tea towels. Wit until the end.

I must admit I didn't take to the start of the second set. They seemed to be trying too hard to be musical and didn't just let the irony and wit take over. They did however redeem themselves with the brilliant, Shitty White Wine a forlorn tale of lost love and drink dependency that had some of the best country lines I've heard "Every bottle comes with a warning, hangover in the morning" "My friend the Screw top let me down at nearly 3 pounds."

Sheer lyrical brilliance, a real set stealer. They got me back and they looked like they were working their way to fantastic end, with a wonderful Cajun parody, full of the best school boy French called Moutarde, when they ruined it all for me by playing an Ok version of Steve Earle's Galway Girl. I suppose they know their audience and it was aimed at the line dancers but not for me, nope. They just didn't need it. They have written far better and far more honest songs. The drummer saved it all though by playing a great solo. (Phew!)

I didn't let this small indiscretion ruin the night though. It was great fun and they played some of the best tongue in cheek country music I had heard since the early days of Hank Wangford. A great London band full of sharp edged wit and bang up to date banter. They are on a 14 day UK tour, so check out the dates and venues on their [website](#) – and go and have a great night. I did.

The Band Are:

James Studholme, Guitar & Vocals

Pete Robinson, Guitar & Vocals

Eddie Bishop, Fiddle, Ukulele & Vocals

Tim Dowling: Banjo, Clawhammer, Harmonica, Organ & Vocals

Michael Giri, Drums & Vocals

Adam Bennette, Bass

Tim Jepson, Mandolin & Vocals

They have 2 albums out:

From the Land of Miracles & Here to Bite Crime

Tour & Band information can be found on their [website](#).