



Janovitz and Crown Victoria Rock Brookline 300th Anniversary Festival

By Michael J. Atwood

Bill Janovitz and Crown Victoria entertained the late-afternoon crowd at “Brookline 300 Anniversary” on Sunday, amid the green hilltop backdrop of Lars Anderson Park. Their vigorous 40-minute set included songs from the band’s 2004 release “Fireworks on T.V.” as well as a soulful rendition of The Rolling Stones’ “Loving Cup”. The cover was quite appropriate in the weeks following the release of Janovitz’s book “Exile on Main St.” (33 1/3), a sentimental interpretation of his favorite and legendary album. The songs from “Fireworks on T.V.” are a combination of Janovitz’s punk-pop songwriting with Buffalo Tom with traces of his country-acoustic solo work with Calexco on 1997’s “Lonesome Billy” and 2001’s “Up Here”. Either way, the crowd responded warmly to the band’s energy and intensity despite the crisp November air.

Janovitz, donning a pair of sunglasses, jeans, and a slung-down-low Telecaster, opened the show with “Sinking” as the sun began to disappear opposite the Boston skyline. His jangling chords, creative solos, and edgy vocals were supported by the finger-work of Buffalo Tom keyboardist, Phil Aiken, whose Hammond organ added a supportive wall of sound and bright melodic tapestry. The band continued with “Found Out”, “Believe”, and the title track, “Fireworks on T.V.”, played in a countryesque style, supported by the band’s strong backbeat. Drummer Tom Polce and bassist Matt Tahaney add a vocal dimension to the Crown Victoria sound that perhaps Buffalo Tom never realized.

The afternoon festival setting seemed odd for the band who would appear to be more at home in the darkness of The Paradise or Middle East Downstairs. Nevertheless, they won fans with both the adults and children, who congregated near the front of the stage along with Janovitz’s own daughter, Lucy, whom he commented “This (Loving Cup) is her favorite Stones’ song.”

Janovitz concluded the show with “Mary Kay” a sentimental point-of-view song about Vili Fualaau’s introspective words after his lover and teacher, Mary Kay Laterno is sent to prison for the crime she has committed. Janovitz’s cry of “Oh my gentle, Mary Kay, I’d never blame thing on you,” is a catchy yet frightening refrain of an unconventional, star-crossed love affair. Still, despite the festival atmosphere, the crowd of new and old fans seemed to respond to the new songs of Bill Janovitz and Crown Victoria. Janovitz’s songwriting and sound gives hope to the wasteland of rock music endured on radio airwaves today.