

SUMMER POPS Bill Wyman and his Rhythm Kings/ Echo Arena Liverpool

Last-minute change a perfect addition

BY RICHARD DOWN

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DR HOOK frontman Dennis Locorriere was a surprise addition to former Rolling Stone Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings gig at the Arena last night.

He joined legendary guitarist Albert Lee and the taciturn bassist on stage as part of the nine-piece outfit that ripped through 20 songs.

Wyman, as ever, stuck to the shadows through a rip-snorting set list, only stepping into the limelight to introduce the lone Stones song, Honky Tonk Women.

"We were the first non-Merseyside band to play The Cavern," he told the Arena audience. "We always got a good reaction out of Liverpool crowds and so, just this once, we'll do a Stones version - but just this once."

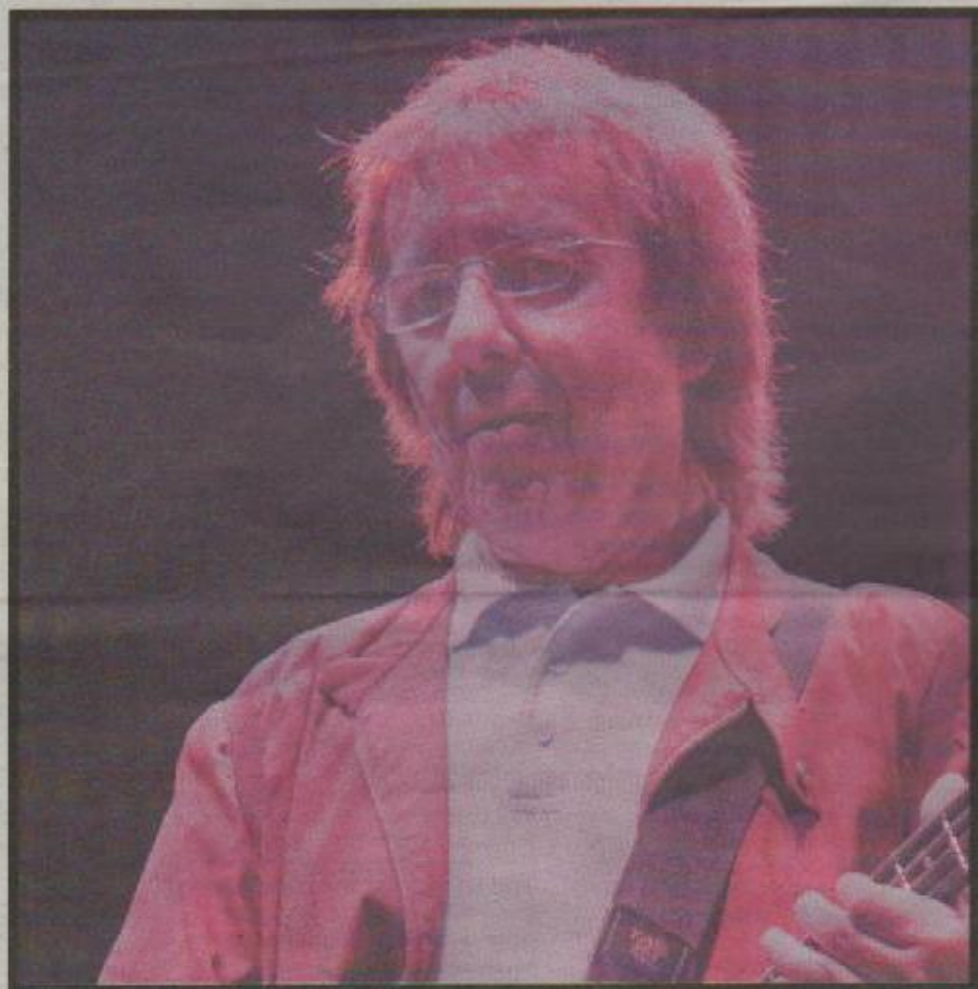
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Note perfect, but in no way reverential, the band blew the cobwebs away from the 1968 number.

This was a high point of a great gig, but it was possibly surpassed by Beverley Skeete's stunning version of Nina Simone's I've Put a Spell on You, in which the sax and vocals intertwined with visceral force.

Then Albert Lee took centre stage, laying down his six-string in favour of piano to accompany a heart rending version of The Everley Brothers' Crying in the Rain. He picked the guitar back up to shred through Tear It Up, with Wyman's articulate bass keeping pace with his frenetic fretboard work.

The Rhythm Kings are a vast family of musicians and are incredibly adaptable. Locorriere's last-minute introduction made soul



Bill Wyman - sticking to the shadows at the Echo Arena

Picture: DAVE MUNN

classics such as Wilson Pickett's Do You Like Good Music effortless, and his loose-limbed dancing acted as counterpoint to Wyman's static presence.

In fact, after last night's performance, it is hard to imagine a Rhythm Kings gig without him.

In contrast to the headliners' high energy performance, The John Martyn Band seemed a little lost on an Arena-sized stage.

Martyn's heart-wrenching blues and space age folk nevertheless carry a formidable weight.

These days he performs from a wheelchair and rambles between songs, but when he gets behind songs like The Man in The Station and Dreams By The Sea, he captures something deeply touching and it is patently clear the pain he intones is very real.

Wyman and Martyn make an unlikely pairing, but the combination of a crowd-pleasing band and an introspective solo artist made for an oddly fulfilling evening at The Pops.

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