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Jim McCarty introduces The Yardbirds to the next generation



The Yardbirds

Photo courtesy of Trevor Heath / used with permission (Johnny A photo by Brian Malloy)

At 72 years old, and more than five decades since he helped form [The Yardbirds](#), [Jim McCarty](#) still likes to live on the edge when it comes to his [music](#).

“I think that was a big part of the group, which was to be experimental,” said the Hall of Fame drummer. “It was a bit hit or miss in a way, but we were very lucky – we got more hits than misses.”

That’s for sure. One of the seminal British blues-rock band, The Yardbirds was home to the best of the best when it came to guitarists, with Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page all taking the stage with them at one time or another. These days, as the band prepares to hit the B.B. King Blues Club & Grill for a Monday, November 2 gig, the man taking what has to be the most intimidating job in all of rock is veteran axeman Johnny A, and McCarty is confident he is up to the challenge.

“I’ve actually played with him a few times, so I know he’s very good and he’s very, very keen and enthusiastic. I’ve yet to really hear him play the whole repertoire, which will be exciting, so it’s a little bit experimental, but I feel positive that this lineup is going to work, and it’s gonna be good.”

There’s that experimental thing again, but it’s what keeps things fresh for a band that still delivers the classics with an oomph their younger peers couldn’t manage. And when it comes to playing the Big Apple, that’s always a reason for McCarty and company (Johnny A, Kenny Aaronson, Myke Scavone and John Idan) to bring their “A” game.

“I’m always excited to go there,” McCarty said. “There’s always a big buzz. It can be a bit of a difficult audience. I think they’ve more or less seen everything there, haven’t they? But B.B. King’s is nice and we usually do pretty well there.”

It’s an interesting comment from the Liverpool native, simply because you would guess that The Yardbirds (of which McCarty is the only remaining member of the original lineup) could just stand on stage for a couple hours and still garner a rousing ovation. But McCarty isn’t interested in living on past accomplishments. When he plays those songs, it’s like he’s doing it for the first time all over again.

“I always feel that people have paid and they want to see a good show,” he said. “It’s always very satisfying to play well together, and it’s quite important to me.”

So what’s the secret of the band’s music still holding up after all these years?

“I have no idea,” he laughs. “There is no secret or hidden formula. It just stands the test of time for some reason. When you play the repertoire, it’s so good. Those old songs all together, it’s very, very powerful. The mixture of hits and the old blues covers and things like “Smokestack Lightning” and “Train Kept a Rollin,” they all still work, and it’s fantastic.”

If I could deliver a guess, maybe it’s because McCarty, a 1992 inductee of the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#), isn’t affected by his place in music history. He’s as humble as they come, and perhaps that attitude has kept him hungry to always think of the next gig and not the last one.

“I’ve always been a very modest person, I think, and probably a bit of an insecure person as well,” he said. “So I’ve never really completely taken that thing on board. But the more and more people I talk to people like Alice Cooper and Little Steven and all these really big names that are big Yardbirds fans, that wears off, and I suppose that’s how I’ve learned that it is such a fantastic name.”

And one he represents proudly more than 50 years after their first album.

“It’s become part of our lives now,” McCarty said. “It still runs through me and it’s in my blood. It’s not just the Yardbirds, because I do my own songs as well and I like to sing and play acoustic stuff. But I love it and I just think playing the Yardbirds repertoire is such a fantastic experience.”

It’s also a lot more exciting than if he would have kept his old day job as a stockbroker.

“What a different life,” he laughs. “I probably would have been a lot

richer, but only in terms of money, nothing else.”

The Yardbirds play the B.B. King Blues Club & Grill on Monday, November 2. For tickets, click [here](#)