

## Department S Reunion Gig at 100 Club, 5 Feb 2010

I can't remember ever arriving at the 100 Club at 7.45pm in the past but tonight is special. I sit on a bucket seat by the DJ as the punters begin to file into the club. Chelsea Jeff insists on telling me how his Dickenson dentist yanked out two of his teeth earlier that day. Nevertheless, Jeff plays an excellent catalogue of Stiff Records tunes throughout the evening. As I glance around the place, I'm transported back to the early 70s at the Tommy White club in Shepherds Bush, waiting for my Suedehead crush to appear, only for him to fawn over the local Queen Bee in her tonic dress and Shelley loafers. I'd hopelessly stomp to the sounds of 'Double Barrel' in a failed attempt to lure him. I soon became a glam rocker and with a shake of a feather boa and a tilt of my pill-box hat; I left the waft of Brut-scented, Ben Sherman dreams behind me. I'm suddenly brought back to the present by a Liverpudlian who asks if I'm 'That bird who used to be in Eastenders'. I have no idea which bird he is on about until he walks back to his mates and I overhear the name 'Cindy Beale' as he gives me the thumbs up and spills beer down his jumper. The venue fills up at a quickening pace and I sense there are old friends reuniting as I hear screams of 'It's been years!'...indeed, there's magic in the air. Around 9.00pm, Department S takes to the stage, smartly dressed and raring to go. There's no hint of these guys trying to recapture the 80s. That was then and this is now. We're presented with revamped favourites including 'Clap Now', 'Monte Carlo or Bust', 'Going Left-Right', 'I Want'...all packed with an electrical charged depth and sincerity as they lead us into the new and infectious 'Wonderful Day'. They play with a passion and a vintage which has matured with time and is full of surprises. The crowd sing along, wave their arms and some think they are too cool for school, but I see their feet tapping like the clappers. This is serious stuff, these boys can play. Mizon attacks the drums as if his life depends on it; Taylor plays bass with ease yet it pumps like a desperate heartbeat; Burnett teases his nimble fingers across his guitar like a devoted lover and Herbage presents an effortless masterclass in rock guitaring, you sense his fevered energy of which there is no bounds, and, as Roxy informed us after a spellbinding 'Bage' guitar solo, 'Sometimes we just let it go on and on'. Roxy has big spats to fill and he does it beautifully, bantering with us and singing with an attitude the songs command while dropping to softer tones and evoking an emotional wallop with the new version of 'Ode to Koln'. The opening chords to 'Is Vic There?' send the crowd into a rocking crescendo; they know every line as if they had written the song themselves, they shout the chorus and punch the air with delight. Yes, Vic is back, and about bloody time! The late-Vaughn Toulouse watches over the proceedings from a framed picture on stage...like Dorian Grey, forever young. But it's over all too soon, the applause is deafening as we selfishly demand more. The band leaves the stage, sweaty and smiling, in the secure knowledge they did good. I've had the pleasure of attending many great gigs for over 35 years including the Ziggy Stardust retirement at Hammersmith Odeon, the New York Dolls at Biba and Patti Smith at CBGB. I can proudly add this night to my all-time favourite gigs list. My only regret is 'The Speak' isn't still open in nearby Margaret Street, who knows who Department S could have jammed with afterwards? As Malcolm McLaren would say - This band will be the next Bay City Rollers.

### About the Author

The lady from another grinning soul...

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