

BRISBANE POWERHOUSE TURBINE PLATFORM: 04.07.10

Speaking plainly, Charles Jenkins is the kind of songwriter who demonstrates the true limitations of the art of song – in that he appears to be bound by none. Appearing onstage this afternoon as part of the Brisbane Powerhouse's weekly LiveSpark event with only an acoustic guitar and a cold, Jenkins nevertheless delivers the kind of set that astonishes in its depth, variety and good humour.

The literate 'Across The Nullarbor' opens proceedings and the songwriter uses the song's expansive flavour as a launch-pad to a myriad of disparate territories – leaping from the amusing tribute that is 'Shelley Winters' into the gorgeous tragedy of 'Autumn Fall' while concluding the latter with a bizarrely fitting nod to Herman's Hermits' 'Wonderful World'. The real touchstone of the set is Jenkins' wonderful rendition of Cole Porter's 'Miss Otis Regrets'. A relatively obscure choice from the Porter catalogue, the piece's characteristic blend of pathos, humour and intelligence effectively summarises Jenkins' entire aesthetic while its presence within the Melbournite's set only reinforces Jenkins' position as a songwriter's songwriter.

The Sunburys are an entirely different proposition – though only marginally less enjoyable. Whereas Jenkins' set constituted an in-depth exploration of a broad and all-encompassing art form, The Sunburys are distinguished by their rigorous adherence to (and subsequent mastery of) the various incarnations of early-70s blues-rock/pop.

The greatest compliment one can pay the band is that they transcend each and every cliché one could associate with them – coming across as timeless where other bands would sound retrogressive. One could attribute this to a myriad of separate factors – musicianship, songwriting, et cetera – but, ultimately, it comes down to the band's unnerving attention to detail

The sheer precision of every aspect of the band's set is utterly remarkable. Anthony Dettori's songwriting is sharp and erudite on tracks like 'Soul Singer' and the overall musicianship of the trio is exceptionally taut while the partnership of bassist Andrew O'Sullivan and drummer Scott Lapthorne is perhaps the best of its kind in Brisbane.

Granted, the band's best efforts don't really compare to Charlie Jenkins' brilliant performance – and Dettori effectively admits as much mid-set – but that doesn't mean The Sunburys didn't deliver a marvellous performance this afternoon.

MATT O'NEILL