

## Jersey Shore Rock-n-Soul Revue/Count Basie Theatre/Feb. 28, 2009

—by Ken Shane

RED BANK, NJ—It's hard to think of a more legendary performer from the NJ club scene than Bobby Bandiera. The Orange native began his career with the Dodd's house band Holme in 1970 before moving on to Cats On A Smooth Surface. The latter band's Sunday night residency at the Stone Pony in the '80s attracted Bruce Springsteen to their stage on a weekly basis. Since then, Bandiera has become a key player in Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes and a member of the Bon Jovi touring band.

Despite the fact that he's now playing bigger stages, Bandiera is a working musician, and he continues to find time to play club shows with his band and to bring his Jersey Shore Rock-n-Soul Revue to area theaters. The Revue shows always have a theme. In the past, themed shows have included the music of Motown, Phil Spector, and Roy Orbison. The Revue will be doing their Orbison show again at the Basie on April 23 and at the State Theatre in New Brunswick on June 2.

For this show at the Count Basie Theatre, the evening's theme was "Brothers." The show focused on music created by bands that featured brothers, including the Bee Gees, the Rascals (although not technically a member of the band, Bandiera explained that David Brigati often sang with his brother Eddie on the Rascals records), the Beach Boys, Allman Brothers Band, AC/DC, and others. In keeping with the theme, the show also featured performances by Bobby's own brothers. Frank sat in on drums for a few songs, replacing the extremely capable Josh Dion, and Vincent played accordion on a magical rendition of the Rascals "How Can I Be Sure."

The 13-piece band included three horn players and two background singers. No one will ever accuse Bandiera of hogging the spotlight. He graciously gave band members a chance to shine, and shine they did, in particular background vocalist Ricky Collins, who moved up front for a number of songs, and tore the house down with nearly all of them, none more so than on a sizzling take of the Isley Brothers' "It's Your Thing." Collins' background singing partner, Layonne Holmes, shook the walls with a couple of AC/DC songs.

Rhythm guitarist Ray Anderson shined on a powerful version of the Creedence classic "Traveling Band," and dueted with Bandiera beautifully on the Everly Brothers' "Crying In The Rain." Keyboard player Bobby Lynch



was upbeat and animated on the Beach Boys' "I Get Around," and guitarist Jim Celestine nailed down BTO's "Taking Care Of Business." The highlight of the night for me was Bandiera's vocal on the Bee Gees "Nights On Broadway."

Bandiera has a devoted following in this area and they nearly filled the venerable theater. Since most of the music was from the '60s-'70s era, the crowd was a bit older than the usual rock show audience. They also tended to be a little sedate and there was a lot of movement to the bar and bathroom, particularly during the first set. I found myself wishing that I had the FloMax concession that night, and I don't know if the guy in front of me on his cell phone was talking to his broker or his bookie. It's more or less the same these days anyway, right?

Bobby Bandiera is a skilled, talented, and charismatic musician. It takes all of those things and more to rise out of the NJ club scene and play on the stages of the world. No one has worked harder or is more deserving of his success than Bobby Bandiera.



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