

Review: Stone Foundation, Clwb Ifor Bach

So often dubbed the best unsigned band around, yet record contracts have frustratingly eluded them



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Stone Foundation - Paul Weller's a big fan (Image: Tony Chapman)

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It's been a 14-year slog for Warwickshire band the Stone Foundation. So often dubbed the best unsigned band around, to see those words in print after yet another acclaimed performance must have been frustrating as record contracts eluded them.

With their love of soul music, the snazzily attired band have certainly earned respect, gigging solidly with their self-produced albums finding their way into the charts on their performances alone and by word-of-mouth.

Receiving plaudits and a nodding approval from such pop luminaries as **Paul Weller** and The Specials, the bands profile was boosted immensely following a chance encounter with Specials drummer John Bradbury after tearing it up a storm at a North London gig.

They offered the band the support slot on their UK arena tour and things changed dramatically for the band who were then snapped up by Japanese record label P-Vine following a trip East at the invitation of the British Embassy in Tokyo, culminating recently in a successful appearance at the Fuji Rock Festival.

So it must have been very different treading the boards at the distinctly cosy Clwb Ifor Bach last night and anyone expecting a more subdued performance because of the contrast need not have worried as the band played a blinding set in front of a snappily dressed and equally enthusiastic audience.

Opening with the punchy Beverley from their latest offering Life Unlimited, there was no let up in the pace as the solid eight-piece band set about their music with relish.

Visually its founder members vocalist and guitarist Neil Jones and bassist Neil Sheasby who stand out. Jones singing as if his life depended on it and so more soulful live, whilst Sheasby prowled stage-front as if searching for those few in the crowd not moving to their scintillating beat.

Not to be outdone the horn section were a delight, punchy and dynamic giving the songs that extra lift, adding to some powerfully tight drumming and conga playing with keyboard player Ian Arnold filling in the gaps with some delightful playing.

New songs Pushing Your Love and Learning The Hard Way stood out in an exhilarating performance that seemed to be over too soon. Hopefully now this band will kick on and receive the rewards their talent so richly deserves followed by a prompt return to the capital.

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