

****NELA Music Scene****

HANDS ON PERFORMANCE– VFW POST-1809 RODNEY J HOBBS

August 3, 2024, Monroe, LA

In a stellar display of musical prowess, the band Hands On took the stage at VFW Post 1890, captivating the audience with their bold and innovative approach to live music. With a fearless attitude that encouraged them to venture outside traditional boundaries, they took their audience on a musical odyssey of genres and time. It was a memorable evening.

Located in Northeast Louisiana at 1499 Louisiana Highway 594, the VFW Post 1809 is named for Rodney J. Hobbs from Eros, LA. Rodney enlisted in the military at the age of 20. He served overseas from June 12, 1917, until his death on July 21, 1918. VFW Post 1809 has developed into a prominent regional hub for music and other cultural happenings. With every assembly, Rodney and all Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) are honored. Thank you VFW Post Commander Roland LeGuin for the invitation and your leadership.

Tonight, the VFW hosted the Hands On Band. When I arrived, they were playing B.B. King's blues anthem "The Thrill is Gone" for their sound check. I knew this was going to be a great experience. The Hands On Band are seasoned musicians. There's not one technical problem, instrument failure, last-minute key change, or management issue they haven't encountered and had to solve.

I spoke with lead singer and guitarist Clayton Maza a few minutes before the show. I wanted to hear more about his work with Clay LaBeff on his album "Can You See Me Now." I told Clayton the songs were beautiful works, had depth, and were radio-friendly—a powerful combination. Clayton talked about the work that went into the project and said a good song is a good song. I agree with Clayton and look forward to more collaborations from this team. Clayton also commented that Hands On has played more dates in the last two years than ever before. I shared with him my impression that we would remember this summer as the 2024 Great Summer of Music, and he agreed.

Hands On displayed a "No Fear" attitude, venturing outside the box and improvising as they engaged the audience with multiple genres of music. They honored the song structures while creating their own signature sound. Several factors made this technically possible. Bass player Kenny McCallum and drummer Danny Dean are experienced and rock solid. Intertwined with Randy New's big-sounding keyboard work, Clayton had a broad platform from which to create.

Their soundscape filled every nook and cranny of the venue. Playing songs like “Walk Softly,” “Caribbean Queen,” “Tennessee Whiskey,” and “Born to Boogie” kept the audience engaged, evoking applause and cheers. I really enjoyed “Tennessee Whiskey.” The crowd danced all evening long.

During a break between sets, I asked Kenny about the work they put into the background vocals for one of John Anderson's songs. It didn't sound like it took as much effort as I thought. That's not true across the board; others would have to put in more time. Seeing Clayton's son Lennon sing “Looking for Love” was awesome! Other crowd favorites included “Billie Jean,” “Whole Lot of Shakin’,” “The Twist,” “Left Side of the Bed,” and “Just a Swinging.”

If you need live music for your party or other social occasion, book Hands On. You are guaranteed success. Thank you, Post Commander Roland LeGuin, for all your work with the veterans and supporting live music.

Tom M.