

GREAT JONES

Title: Fillmore East 1970

Label: Wolfgang's Vault

Release Date: 2012

Medium: Download

Availability: Very Good

Venue: Fillmore East, NYC, NY

Recording Date: September 11 and 12, 1970

Lineup: David Tolmie - Bass, vocals
Billy Cadieux - Guitar

Gary Kollarus - Drums
Jeff Gutcheon - Keyboards (9/11/70)

Set List: 9/11/1970

Leaving Trunk
I Ain't Got Long
One Way Ticket

Hard To Handle
You've Been A Good Old Wagon

9/12/1970

No More/Leaving Trunk
One Way Ticket
Ain't Nothing I Can Do

You've Been A Good Old Wagon
United State Of Mind
Finding My Way

Great Jones was a New York City based band that was one of a few signings made by Tonsil Records in 1970. The initial version of the band was led by Jay Traynor, former lead singer of Jay and the Americans. This version released one single. The second, better known, version of the group was a blues/funk rock power trio that released one album and a single on Tonsil Records in 1970.

In 1970, the Lois Holland Callaway advertising agency decided to branch into music and started a new record label called Tonsil Records. It was run by Neville Gerson, a wealthy playboy. Gerson signed a handful of acts to the label, including the first version of Great Jones and Gas Mask, a horn based rock band modeled after Blood, Sweat & Tears. At the time, Great Jones, which was named after the street in Greenwich Village, included Jay Traynor (born March 30, 1943 in Brooklyn, NY), the first singer in Jay and the Americans, as well as guitarist Billy Cadieux.

With loads of money behind Tonsil Records, expectations for Great Jones were very high. They released their first single, "I'll Keep It With Mine", written by Bob Dylan in 1970. It was the first record released by the label. The B side of the single was "My Lovin' Woman", written by Jay Traynor. The single was produced by Jerry Ragavoy, one of the most noted producers of the time. It did not chart and the relationship between Traynor and Tonsil quickly fell apart. Before long, Traynor left the group.

At the same time, David Tolmie was in a New York City cover band that was playing the local club scene. Cadieux saw them play and was authorized by Gerson to offer Tolmie a spot in the band. The new version of the band also included drummer Gary Kollarus. Gerson teamed them with engineer Joe Zagarino, who had worked with the Band but was handling production for the first time, and the trio headed off to Boston to lay down some tracks.

They released a single, “Cripple Creek/I Ain’t Got Long”, in advance of their one lone album, *All Bowed Down* (1970). The album was named after a song written by Jeff Gutcheon, who was featured on the album and sometimes sat in with the group when they played live. Cadieux had met and became friends with Gutcheon, who worked as an apprentice at Jerry Ragavoy’s Hit Factory Studios, when the first version of Great Jones was signed and Ragavoy produced their debut single.

The trio was known for their eclectic covers, often of blues artists. Their sound featured equal elements of blues and funk, with some psychedelia thrown in for good measure. They were heavily promoted, traveling up and down the East Coast opening for Jefferson Airplane and the Mothers Of Invention. They also opened for Delaney & Bonnie and the Byrds at the Fillmore East. While the album and the single did well in certain markets, it did not chart nationally.

Great Jones was ready to record their second album when Tonsil folded in 1971. The album was picked up by Polydor Records, but the window had passed and it did not sell. With no more financial backing, the group fell apart. After the demise of Great Jones, Tolmie remained in music. He provided background vocals on Huey Lewis and the News 1988 hit, *Small World*, and was a member of Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen in 1994. Cadieux recorded with Don Covay in 1975 and was a member of the The Players Association in NYC between 1977 and 1980.

Great Jones’ one album, *All Bowed Down*, is out of print but can be found if you look hard enough. It is also on YouTube. The only live material from them that I can find was taken from their two night stand opening for the Byrds at the Fillmore East in 1970. It can be streamed on Wolfgang’s Vault.

My only live recordings of Great Jones are the aforementioned Fillmore East sets, which I was able to purchase from Wolfgang’s Vault during the limited time that they were selling downloads. The band opened for Delaney and Bonnie and the headliner, The Byrds, on two consecutive nights in September, 1970. At the time, they had just released their lone album, *All Bowed Down*. On the first night, the trio was accompanied by guest keyboardist, Jeff Gutcheon. Their five song set included three songs from that album, along with a great cover of Otis Redding’s “Hard To Handle” and an eclectic cover of Bessie Smith’s “You’ve Been A Good Old Wagon”. Recording quality is excellent.

The band opens their set with the Sleepy John Estes cover, “Leaving Trunk”. The band takes the blues piece and adds a funky psychedelic vibe. Tolmie’s gruff vocals are strong and the highly distorted guitar work of Cadieux is strong. Tolmie’s bass work and the drum work of Kollarus is solid. Gutcheon provides the funky undertone with his electric piano.

The group abruptly changes direction during the slow blues grind of an original song, “I Ain’t Got Long”. Tolmie’s vocals capture the passion of the song and the band takes their time developing the song. Gutcheon contributes an electric piano solo but the star of the song is Cadieux, who delivers an outstanding blues based solo that is nimble and well structured.

Tolmie introduces the next song as “Leaving California”. It is actually a cover of Richard and Mimi Farina’s “One Way Ticket”. The piece is played up tempo, featuring great ensemble work from the entire band, including Gutcheon. Tolmie’s Steve Marriott like vocals are outstanding.

Great Jones really hits their stride with an outstanding cover of “Hard To Handle”. While I know that it was nearly impossible for them to have heard this cover, The Black Crowes’ version of the song is a near

copy. Tolmie tears into the lyrics and the band hits a funky groove behind him that never quits. Kollarus is particularly effective. While there is some excess jamming, the piece is very strong.

The band ends their set with an eclectic cover of Bessie Smith's "You've Been A Good Old Wagon". The song features a repeating strong riff from Gutcheon and Cadieux, along with more solid vocals from Tolmie.

Gutcheon does not sit in with the group on the second night which features Great Jones in all their power trio glory. Cadieux's guitar work is much more dominant and the band amps up the rhythm work of Tolmie and Kollarus. Some of the performances are reminiscent of Cream, with strong bass and drum work.

The set opens with a medley of the hard rocking guitar hero based "No More", which sounds like vintage Humble Pie. It merges into a strong version of "Leaving Trunk", which had been played the night before. The band then plays "One Way Ticket", also from the night before. This version is a little grittier, with stronger lead guitar work.

Great Jones hits their blues catalog once again with a cover of Albert King's "Ain't Nothing I Can Do". Once again, Cadieux shines, showing an impressive knowledge of classic slow blues guitar riffs with a hint of San Francisco late sixties guitar work thrown in. Tolmie is also outstanding, giving a Janis Joplin vibe to the song, which could have been on a Big Brother and the Holding Company album.

After another cover of the Bessie Smith song from the night before, the group tackles "United State Of Mind". This one is classic late sixties hard rock, with outstanding guitar work, great Jack Bruce influenced bass work, and propulsive drumming. Tolmie's vocals are terrific. If you want to know how good this band really was, all you have to do is listen to this song.

The band ends the second night with another original song, "Finding My Way". The song is performed up tempo with more great guitar, drum and bass work. There is a Cream like vibe to the piece, which is cut off prematurely.

Clearly, Great Jones was a solid band that was highly capable of holding their own with other blues rock trios of the day. While their style was not distinctive enough to break out of the pack, they deserved better than becoming a virtually unknown obscure early seventies band. Thanks to Wolfgang's Vault for bringing them to the light of day. If you like Cream, Humble Pie, or Big Brother, give them a listen.