

Hokowhitu Lightning

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There's one thing I regret about Friday night show -Scorsese wasn't in the room to record Paul Ubana Jones and kick off a documentary about the Howokhitsu Bowling Club Series. Scorsese missed the lightning that touched us all. Steve Tolley, the man who bottles in this lightning, does know how to pull a trick.

Helen Dorothy set the scene with her beautiful and at times cheeky songs that embody the idea of travelling and making the most of the journey.

I've been Paul Ubana Jones' fan since the night I watched his video cover of U2's "One". To be honest, at the time I didn't know it was Bono's song, so for me it continues to be Paul's -he turns it into such a tender, moving and deep story -the video, his voice, his presence are as rich as the song. And that's because he tells his stories in such a way that he becomes a part of them, bringing his Yorkshirness into them, and pulling us all into a story that becomes ours. And there's that lightning, the electricity that comes out of him and his guitar. I was mesmerised as he was playing and wondering how many guitars he was playing at once -I saw more than one guitar in his hands.

The Hokowhitsu Bowling Club is true Kiwiana -the carpet, the curtains, the formica tables, the dear old ladies serving cheesecake (I got the last one) and tea for \$5. And here comes this man from Yorkshire, who plays Hendrix like only Hendrix could play himself, and turns a John Lennon song into something greater than perhaps not even Lennon could have dreamt of. When he played "Norwegian Wood" it reminded me of what Nina Simone did for the Bee Gee's "Love Somebody" -a sentimental love story that could easily fall into corniness is elevated, dignified, turned into an act of magic that, again, pulls us in.

We were no longer in Palmerston North on Friday night. This man with his many guitars and his many lives took us somewhere else, a place of wonder we didn't know we needed to go to. You can tell this man has lived, has been places, some of them dark, when you're listening to "Rest in my Arms" or "My Lucky Star." I suspect there is a great deal of Yorkshire left in him and more travelling ahead, with his Protean guitar and that wonderful voice that makes you feel the stories come from afar, somewhere deep, a place touched by lightning, as we all were that night. If only our pockets were deep enough, as his song goes, to carry the diamonds he's leaving on his trail.

Photo: The man tuning his guitar.