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## Jean Shy isn't Shy

February 7, 2011 by [John Hurd](#)

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Fate can be strange. Mid-set Jean Shy sang 'Still got the Blues', and at evenings end I had an SMS saying the songs writer Gary Moore was dead. The music he loved so much is very much alive though and Shy and her 'Shy Boys' band proved it with a shimmering display at The Harmonie on Sunday.

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Jean Shy was born in Chicago and at only twelve years old was signed up to the legendary Chess Record label. She's written four childrens books, had her own U.S. TV programme and as recently as 2009 she was a Blues Music Awards Nominee from the renowned 'Blues Foundation'. How can it be then that most of the Blues fans I've spoken to at other shows had never heard her name? In the words of RUF Records Managing Director Thomas Ruf "People forget quickly". Promoter Manuel Banha saw her some fifteen years ago in Bonn and didn't forget though.

The reward for Banha's good memory and taste was a mesmerising evening. Back to the roots of the Blues in tracks like 'Boom Boom' and the Etta James classic 'Wang dang doodle' but also showing the flowers those roots have produced: modern classics like Cockers 'Unchain my Heart', 'Whitesnakes 'Aint no Love' and Gary Moore's 'Still got the Blues'.

Further proof of where those roots have taken hold was physically on hand in the shape of teenager Alex Walker from California band 'Nine Door Empire' who joined Shy's lead guitar duo for a storming 'Sweet Home Chicago'. His own band is more in the Foo Fighters direction he told me, but he listens to everything and usually the blues is in there somewhere. Despite Shy having made diverse discs over her long career – with Gospel, Soul and Jazz offerings – tonight Blues is thankfully not just 'in there somewhere' but is everywhere. 'My Girl', 'Little Red Rooster', 'Rock me all night long' every one a classic sung and played flawlessly.



You know the band puts music first when the bass player sits on a barstool – automatically there's a wonderful old fashioned 'bigband' feeling. These guys were 'Erste Sahne' too as a German colleague later described them (cream of the crop as we Brits would say) They reminded me of the sort of people you'd see behind Elvis or BB King. Musicians who can (and do) play everything fate (and top quality singers) throws at them. They even keep the beat perfectly on 'Sag mir wo die Blumen sind'. One minute conjuring up a John Lee Hooker rhythm the next a searing Gary Moore solo.

Which brings me back to the sad news of the evening. Jean had a bad cold so after getting a CD signed I wished her 'Gute Besserung' and mentioned Gary Moore's passing. He was a hero of mine I remarked. "Mine too!" she replied. Somehow I think Jean Shy is someone Gazza, with his love for raw Chicago Blues, would treasure hearing that from.



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