

# THE VENTURES

## SUMMER TOUR OF JAPAN, 2018

*report and photos by Dave Towers*

As I take my seat at my first show on a Ventures Japan tour I am wondering whether this show will be as good as last year. This summer my trepidation was increased further because of the introduction of Luke Griffin following the retirement of Gerry McGee, the last original group member.

I had read all the negative publicity: no original members, not the real Ventures, a tribute band - all implying that it can't be very good. Would the promoters buy it? Would the people turn out to watch it? Well, I needn't have worried. Perhaps it was because my expectations were not particularly high, but I was stunned at the quality of this show. In a word: Class. Two hours flew by. From the photographs of the band I had seen on social media earlier in the year from the USA, I had been impressed by their smart new appearance - all black with a coloured tie. I had said before travelling to Japan that if the show was anywhere near as good as the presentation then all would be well. And it was.

The band walked onto a darkened open stage, the safety curtain was raised and their shadows appeared on the grey back-curtain as they



walked on and waved to the audience. Then the applause began as they started *Walk Don't Run* to spectacular lighting effects that enhanced the entire show. There was a lot of movement around the stage throughout by all band members, which was new to me, and much bowing in unison to the audience which, again, I had not

seen before and was good to see.

Luke Griffin surprised me when he played two numbers on lead guitar as did Ian Spalding, and there is no doubt that they are both superb musicians. Bob Spalding put in a faultless performance on lead guitar playing to his strengths. Everyone would be aware that Bob was standing in the shoes of Nokie Edwards and Gerry McGee, which are big shoes to fill. I was impressed.



Ian Spalding Luke Griffin Bob Spalding



Leon Taylor

Leon's performance was probably the best I have seen from him, the bass tattoo with Luke was extended and brilliantly executed. I had seen Hallmark guitars at the Ventures Fanfest last

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year and the year before and I had dismissed them as yet another Mosrite copy, but I liked them - particularly with the look and sound of Luke's pale blue bass with its single pick up and two knobs, just what I like - simple, but effective.

When Luke stepped forward to say a couple of sentences in Japanese there was a big reaction from the audience. But the biggest reaction by far was when Bob and Ian disappeared from the darkened stage at the end of *Hawaii 5-0* and reappeared under spotlights from opposite sides of the auditorium as *Diamond Head* began. It was electric. I didn't even know what was going on. They both did a walkabout among the audience - this was a very visual show.

A lot of work and planning went into this very impressive show and it was no surprise to me that The Ventures had already been booked for next year's tour. Despite all the negative publicity you would have to go a long way before you found an instrumental show of this quality enhanced, as it was, by spectacular lighting effects and quality sound. So if it's near you anytime, then go and see it.



Unless otherwise stated Bob played lead on a Fender Jazzmaster, Ian played rhythm on a Fender Jazzmaster, Luke played a Fender Precision bass, Leon played DW drums.

1st set: *WDR Medley* (*Walk Don't Run - Perfidia - Lullaby Of The Leaves*) / *Here We Go Again* / *Ame No Midosuji* / *Mr Moto* / *Dark Eyes* (Luke on lead,

Ian on bass) / *I Feel Fine* (Luke on lead, Ian on bass) / introductions / *Pipeline* (Ian on lead, Luke on bass) / *Tequila* / *Futari No Ginza* / *Apache* / *Night In F Minor* / *Detour* (Ian on lead, Luke on bass) / *Wipe Out*

2nd set: (for much of this set Hallmark guitars and bass were used) *Nokie Medley* (*Surf Rider - Bulldog - Instant Guitars - Journey To The Stars*) this medley was played to a video featuring Nokie / *Big Surf* / *Kyoto Bojo* / *Kyoto No Koi* (Bob on sitar) / *Vladivostok* (Bob on sitar) / *Yozora No hoshi* / *The Savage* / *Namida No Guitar* / *Cruel Sea* / *Slaughter On 10th Avenue* / *Hawaii 5-0* / *Diamond Head* (during this number Bob and Ian went walkabout among the audience) / *Caravan*