

LIVE REVIEWS

The Mighty Cash Cats

Café Boogaloo
Hermosa Beach, CA

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The Players: Michael J. Smith, lead vocals,
guitar, harmonica, bass; Leticia Blumette, lead
vocals, bass, guitar; Justin Young, drums,
backup vocals; Oliver Thin, guitar, vocals.

Username: michaelj

Material: The Mighty Cash Cats are a four-piece
event band with many different facets to their
sound. Their bread 'n butter is performing Johnny
Cash covers, but they also add female country
songs and karaoke-grade radio classics.

Musicianship: Michael J. Smith leads the per-
formance plucking at a black acoustic guitar,
and crooning into the microphone with a gentle
Southern twang. It's impossible not to be drawn
to the bass texture of his voice—and his physical
and aural resemblance to Cash is practically eerie.
Blumette's steady, patient rhythm on bass seems
almost an afterthought at times, but she steals the
stage with the energy covering songs by Shania
Twain, Gretchen Wilson and Pat Benatar. Even
though Smith is clearly the frontman, Oliver Thin
provides the lead rhythm on his electric guitar, an
unusual dynamic that works quite well overall.
Thin also adds a lick of rock & roll flavor to hits
that would be simply boring on only an acoustic
guitar. Even though the set lasts over three hours,
Young keeps the tempo up all night on drums.

Performance: Unfortunately, it was difficult to
gauge the full ability of the Mighty Cash Cats as
the din of the bar smothered the volume of the
music. Nonetheless, Café Boogaloo provided a



The Mighty Cash Cats: Event band with the chops to cover Cash, Benatar, Idol and more.

great atmosphere that felt more Memphis than
Hermosa Beach—waitresses wore cowboy boots,
Muddy Waters art hung on the wall, and patrons
clutched Coors bottles or downed Jameson.

The group opened with "Folsom Prison Blues."
They continued to up the beat of other Cash tunes,
like "Ring of Fire" and "Walk the Line," not unlike
how a good rain speeds up the lazy Mississippi
River. Smith and Blumette played musical chairs
with their instruments, swapping around acoustic,
bass and electric guitar depending on the song.
They even did duets together like on "Jukebox
Blues" and "Daddy Sang Bass." The second
part of the show—the tribute to female country
singers—was only a paltry three tracks before
they moved on to general rock classics.

The Mighty Cash Cats even took a request
from a birthday girl, only to smoothly reject Lynyrd

Skynyrd's "Free Bird" in favor of "Sweet Home
Alabama" and Billy Idol's "Mony Mony." They
closed with Cash's "Orange Blossom Special"
and ZZ Top's "La Grange" to raucous applause.

Summary: The Mighty Cash Cats are purely live
entertainment for a diverse audience, not a band
to be restricted to concert halls. They know how to
talk to the crowd and maneuver their instruments
and voices to create a body of sound for each
song, no matter the genre or mood. Their strength
is in the Johnny Cash cover hits—even Cash's
daughter Cindy has lauded the group for keeping
her father's music alive—which makes their
country and rock covers seem like a distraction
to their real talent.

—Jessica Aves