

● **29/6/18:** Prohibition Bar, Gateshead.

JAMMSHED

Mike Soanes – vcls., gtr.; Martin Hoile – keybd., (vcls.); Caroline Hoile – cello; Alan O’Neill – bass gtr.; Graham Raine – drs., perc., (vcls.); David Gold – tpt., flg., perc.; Jayne Sewell – sax., (vcls.); Janet Longbottom – tmb., (vcls.)

A new (to me) venue, underneath the railway arches on the South side of the river, an intimate space with decent acoustics – and a modified Jammshed line-up (new cellist and drummer, both of whom fitted in fine).

Looking back through the archives, the first time I saw Mike Soanes sing and play was at a party in Jesmond in 1985. It was good enough to get into my musical jottings at the time and I’ve been going along to see Mike’s bands ever since.

As a songwriter, at first you could see his influences distinctly enough, but increasingly they began to merge, to produce something hard to pin down – rock, folk, blues, jazz and then African sounds – what exactly was it? And would it appeal to several different audiences or fall between a number of stools?

In the event, although there is a dedicated core following, the Soanes outfits have been frustratingly hidden gems. He wants quality musicians to interpret his songs and in Jammshed, he’s got them. They really, really deserve to be more widely heard.

Here are some samples from tonight’s gig:

Red Dust Ghost tells the story of a Zimbabwean refugee. Anxious to contribute to British society but finding himself unwelcome and rejected, he isn’t going to give up. It’s powerful stuff, with a driving rhythm.

Then a change of mood for *Hollow Tree* – a song of far-off childhood that makes you wistful, happy and sad at the same time and includes some wonderful flugelhorn, piano and cello moments.

A current favourite, *Hard Road*, is a new-ish number that cracks along nicely with some fine guitar and piano and a warm sound from the horn section – a song of life and experience, set all over Tyneside.

Some of these songs are gentle and memorably melodic, but should you start to feel too laid-back, this band will snap you out of it with some kick-ass rock ‘n’ roll or an outbreak of funk.

Don’t take my word for it – seek out the music on <http://www.jammshed.com/> or better still, get to a gig yourself.

Geoff Fimister