

James Taylor Project prove themselves so much more than a tribute band

**The James Taylor Project,
Lanercost Cricket Club**

This ain't no tribute. Brian Dales (guitar and vocals), Avril Greenhow Parker (keyboards) and Stuart Johnson (wind synthesiser and saxophones) performed an array of songs made famous by James Taylor, kicking off with an early Taylor tune *Sweet Baby James* followed by his version of the Buddy Holly classic *Everyday* and, with Brian Dales sounding uncannily like the main man, it was clear why the trio had chosen this material.

'Who is James Taylor?' said one lady at the bar, as we all wondered where she had been for the last 30 years: recognition registered with each beautifully interpreted hit.

Don't let me be lonely tonight gave Stuart his chance to pay tribute to the late great Michael



Inspiration:
James Taylor performs at Barack Obama's inaugural celebration

Brecker, who played on Taylor's original recording, with a wonderful fluid tenor sax threading through the vocals and a stunning solo that Brecker himself would have been proud of.

Giving Dale's vocals a rest, instrumentals from Avril and Stuart - *Scarborough Fair* and Joe Sample's *It happens every day* - provided an enjoyable and jazzy break from James Taylor's classics.

The band then swung into Taylor's greatest UK hit *You've got*

a friend, a rendition that had everything the original had. Brian Dales vocally has a remarkable resemblance to James Taylor and his hits continued to be interpreted with the clarity that is Taylor's hallmark.

Following on from the brilliant *Fire and Rain* the band finished with a double encore *Mexico* and *Never die young* followed by a, daunting (for a trio) but nevertheless successful version of *How sweet it is*.

Clearly Brian Dales has a love affair with the music of James Taylor but the trio's cleverly-worked arrangements added colour and new textures to the originals.

In a world awash with musicians mimicking their heroes The James Taylor Project, who brought refreshing vitality to the music, is certainly no tribute band.

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