



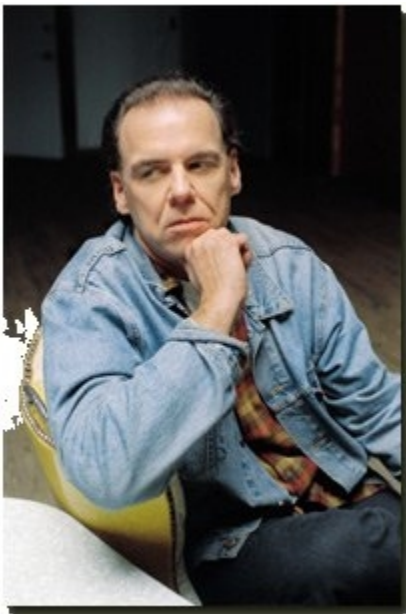
# Atlanta Music Guide

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"if you know what's good for you" ...  
a regular look  
by kevin madigan

09/05/03



Two old stalwarts of the music scene, **John Hiatt** and **Joe Jackson**, have regressed, but in a good way. Both are touring with their original backing bands and have released excellent new records that clearly recall the work they were doing two decades ago. And they both played at the Roxy in Atlanta during the same week.

First I attended Hiatt's show, and what a pleasure it was. He has reformed the original **Goners** line-up, featuring the singular talents of **Sonny Landreth** on slide guitar, **Dave Ranson** on bass and **Kenneth Blevins** on drums. Hiatt and his merry men played most of the new album *Beneath This Gruff Exterior* (New West) and threw in a bunch of older songs too. The 50-year-old rocker seemed particularly cheerful on this night and played with genuine abandon, a relief really when you consider his past troubles not only with the music industry but also with his personal demons.

**Joe Jackson** has much in common with Hiatt, having survived various upheavals in a lengthy career while still being able to deliver the goods. He was somewhat overshadowed by **Elvis Costello**, but if that ever bothered him, he didn't let it show. His concert at the Roxy was devoid of gimmickry and relied simply on solid songs expertly delivered. The Look Sharp line-up – **Gary Sanford**, **Graham Maby** and **Dave Houghton** - was in rare form and played the heck out of the old tunes as well as new ones. Jackson's new album is *Volume 4 (Restless)* and is very much in keeping with the spirit of times past while retaining a very fresh perspective. A fine record.

**Hem** is a band made up of New York musicians that sounds like a throwback to 1970's singer-songwriters. But it works. Redheaded lead singer **Sara Ellison** has a delicate touch but a forceful approach. There is a pedal steel guitar, keyboards, mandolin, percussion and various other instruments vying for attention. Their show at Smith's was surprisingly enjoyable and unlike me, the audience seemed to know most of the band's work. Dreamworks Records has re-issued their debut *Rabbit Songs*, which I look forward to hearing. <http://www.rabbitsongs.com>

The opening act for **Hem** was the very self-effacing **Leona Hess**, who seems to be better each time I see her perform. She is now on the Geffen label, which has been known to spell doom for many an artist, but I daresay she'll manage. Her self-titled CD comes out in October and I suggest you avail yourselves of it. <http://www.leonanaess.com>

Those of you who are into musical experimentation, take note of this: *The Symphony Celebration* is a one-day free event on October 18th, described by Chairwoman **Liz Troy** as a musical open house for all ages. Held at the Woodruff Arts Center, it will have hands-on instruction on four different instrument groups string, woodwind, percussion and brass -with **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** musicians providing individual mini-lessons on the spot. In addition, a bank of computers will be running composing software, enabling users to create a piece of music, and hear it played back instantly. There will be performances as well as lectures and seminars by musical heavyweights like **Ilan Volkov**, **Gary Flint** and **Alexander Mickelthwaite**. It's very cool,"says Troy. We're providing musical activities for every level of interest, knowledge and background."Hours are 10.00 a.m. - 10.00 p.m.

Until next time...