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Weekend Arts I

Still Hot Hot Hot, After All These Years

That Buster Poindexter, a.k.a. David Johansen, the original punk hipster lounge lizard, seems perfectly at home at the elegant Café Carlyle is a sure sign

**STEPHEN
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**MUSIC
REVIEW**

that the punk-rock insurgency that began four decades ago has completed its cycle. Everybody gets the joke, but the joke is still fresh.

The Poindexter character, with his exaggerated pompadour, crocodile grin, and raw Tom Waits growl, is 64 going on 14, and still having the time of his life. Wouldn't we all like to run away and join his little circus?

The good news is that we can, for 90 minutes or so, by attending his show and surrendering to the inner cutup beneath our business attire. On Wednesday evening, Mr. Poindexter, clad in a slightly ratty looking tuxedo, without a tie, cavorted in front of a band that included Brian Koonin on guitar, Clifford Carter on piano, Richard Hammond on upright bass, and Ray Grappone on drums. Deliberately rough edged, they affected the informality of a garage band.

Buster Poindexter aims dead

The program continues through Saturday at Café Carlyle, 35 East 76th Street, Manhattan; 212-744-1600, thecarlyle.com.

Buster Poindexter, a.k.a. David Johansen, in cabaret mode, at Café Carlyle.

center at a novelty tradition that traverses musical styles and eras and embraces blues, jazz, doo-wop, rumba and calypso. He rang the bell every time. A Poindexter staple that perfectly distills his sensibility is "Bad Boy," a 1957 hit for the Jive Bombers whose lead singer Clarence Palmer elongated the word "boy" into a nonsensical stream of "yoy-yoy-yoys." Buster Poindexter followed suit.

On a more serious note, "Nobody," the seminal Bert Williams song from the early 20th century, became a drifter's half-spoken, half-sung monologue in which a transparently false cheeriness made the observations by one of a society's throwaways all the more unsettling. The funniest song, Katie Lee's "Stay as Sick as You Are," praises a lover's "streak of cruelty," "psychopathic lies," and "homicidal tendencies" because no one else would want someone so crazy.

It wasn't all fun and games. The final number, "Heart of Gold," credited to David Johansen, is a straightforward confession of vulnerability: "Well I've been bought and baby, I've been sold and I need protection from the cold."



MICHELLE V. AGINS/THE NEW YORK TIMES