

Cat Stevens (Yusuf Islam) – Dublin 2009

Written by bluesever

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CD 1:

- 01 *Lilywhite*
- 02 *The Wind*
- 03 *Thinking 'Bout You*
- 04 *Where Do The Children Play*
- 05 *Boots & Sand*
- 06 *Welcome Home*
- 07 *Fill My Eyes*
- 08 *Roadsinger*
- 09 *Midday (Avoid City After Dark)*
- 10 *Sitting*
- 11 *I Think I See The Light*
- 12 *Miles from Nowhere*
- 13 *Don't Be Shy*
- 14 *Glass World*
- 15 *Bad Brakes*
- 16 *Moonshadow*
- 17 *Peace Train*

CD 2:

- 01 *All Kinds of Roses*
- 02 *Lilywhite (2009)*
- 03 *Tuesday's Dead*
- 04 *Father and Son (with Ronan Keating)*
-
- 05 *Musical Intro*
- 06 *World of darkness (Yusuf)*
- 07 *Maybe theres a world*
- 08 *Matthew and Son*
- 09 *I Might die tonight*
- 10 *Old school yard*
- 11 *When a door closes (Yusuf)*

12 Father and Son

13 Road to find out

14 Life

15 If you want to sing out, sing out

16 A bad night

17 Wild Word

The Point Depot (aka. the O2) Dublin, IE Nov 15th, 2009

Back on the world stage for the first time in thirty three years (and for the first time ever on these shores), Yusuf Islam has chosen to make his return in a decidedly eclectic and non-conformist manner. It was, undoubtedly, a spectacular way to make your Irish debut – the massive, near sell out, O2 Arena, and despite his singer songwriter identity and persona, his stature and the performance ensured the massive venue had, at points, an intimate feel. Often his charm and character meant it felt like he was performing for you and nobody else. The first half was a mix of songs old (-Where Do The Children Play?') and new (-Boots and Sand'), the crowd happy and singing along as we moved from the opening few songs with Yusuf and two guitarists to a full band for -I Think I See The Light'. All involved seem happy enough and the gig is going well.

However, the second half proved to be a far more divisive affair, introduced by a thirty minute musical which used his songs, but did not feature him in person. For those who had read the promotional material and adverts it should have come as no surprise – but the crowd were certainly divided, as, even from the outset, part of them were slow hand clapping and others shouted abuse at the stage. The musical itself featured a number of Cat Steven's hits including -(Remember the Days of the) Old Schoolyard' and -Matthew and Son' but people were beginning to worry that they were seeing their favourite songs performed by a group of actors rather than the man himself. Perhaps aggrieved at the lack of main artist performing the songs, someone shouted out -Bring Cat Stevens Back' without a hint of irony that we had not seen Cat Stevens all night.

The split seemed to be very much hardcore fans nearer the front loving the new interpretation or at least willing to give it a go, whilst the fair-weather pop single crowd members were less tolerant of the indulgence. This led to the loyal fans in some cases actually matching the dissenters with over-the-top cheers for the return of one of the actors for Moonshadow later in the set. The musical itself was not unlike Mamma Mia or We Will Rock You – a story told between songs, fine in itself but during an artist's own set it felt very out of place. The section of the show itself was poorly lit but the concept was still effective, if a little simplistic. The powerful father/son dynamic plus the spurning of young love played with the audience's emotions. However that did not prevent a spate of slow clapping plus large scale booing, as well as even a

few walk outs. All of which Yusuf was painfully aware of. Therefore when he came back on it was to mixed emotions, announcing 'I haven't left you, don't leave me' which prompted a large cheer.

With the musical finished (possibly slightly early) one might then have expected a climax of all the greatest hits but never one to be lead by convention and more by unapologetic emotional sincerity Yusuf treated us to a cross section of many more recent numbers (-Glass Worl'd) alongside a few of the classics, which placated the majority of the audience, and despite their initial fears they seemed to leave happy. His sincerity was unquestionable: 'God has brought me to Ireland' was a non denominational statement of celebration. And it was his voice, that of an angel, soft yet fully controlled, where the power of a singer songwriter or performer with guitar was obvious. -Now this sounds a bit like the Stones' he announced before breaking into the rockier -Bad Breaks'. However even the more recent or more obscure album tracks that he selected proved troublesome, some fans calling for specific numbers he had no intention of playing. Following the boo's for the musical, there were then boo's when he announced he planned to play a new song instead of the desired old ones. He wryly announced, 'now I know what Dylan felt like' before giving us a beautiful rendition of -All Kinds Of Roses', for which he seemed to feel vindication when the applause followed.

The climax of the evening still included -Moonshadow' and -Peacetrain' superbly performed and prompted extra encores, but the second encore felt more contrived as, perhaps predictably, he was joined on stage by Ronan Keating for an admittedly powerful rendition of -Father and Son'. This capped off a mixed night where one of the greats of music performed for the first time in Ireland and gave 100%. Indeed in thanking the crowd Yusuf Islam said he had, judging how much people paid for the evenings entertainment, -tried to give one and a half shows'. He certainly did that.

Whilst you can sympathise with those who walked out or booed feeling they were there to see the man himself perform the songs (regardless of track selection) they can not be surprised by the event, which clearly stated the debut of his Moonshadow musical. Whilst the musical was simplistic and, yes, a bit boring (though the songs were able to manipulate your emotions) the true genius of Cat Stevens, now Yusuf Islam, remains undiminished. ---James Masterson, state.ie/live-reviews/yusuf-islam-o2-dublin

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