

Peter Gabriel – New Blood At The London O2 (2010)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 01 May 2010 21:02 - Last Updated Sunday, 28 October 2018 21:03

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CD 1:

01. *Heroes (David Bowie cover) (4:22)*
02. *The Boy In The Bubble (Paul Simon cover) (4:31)*
03. *Mirrorball (Elbow cover) (5:02)*
04. *Flume (Bon Iver cover) (3:05)*
05. *Listening Wind (Talking Heads cover) (4:36)*
06. *The Power Of The Heart (Lou Reed cover) (6:00)*
07. *My Body Is A Cage (Arcade Fire cover) (6:29)*
08. *The Book Of Love (The Magnetic Fields cover) (3:49)*
09. *I Think It's Going To Rain Today (Randy Newman cover) (2:47)*
10. *Après Moi (Regina Spektor cover) (5:26)*
11. *Philadelphia (Neil Young cover) (3:53)*
12. *Street Spirit (Fade Out) (Radiohead cover) (5:11)*
13. *Band Introduction (2:03)*

CD 2:

01. *San Jacinto (7:47)*
02. *Digging In The Dirt (5:06)*
03. *Downside Up (7:05)*
04. *Signal To Noise (6:47)*
05. *Mercy Street (6:09)*
06. *The Rhythm Of The Heat (6:40)*
07. *The Drop (3:53)*
08. *Darkness (6:33)*
09. *Solsbury Hill (7:32)*
10. *In Your Eyes (7:22)*
11. *Band Introduction (2:53)*
12. *Don't Give Up (8:05)*
13. *The Nest That Sailed The Sky (4:07)*

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Another week, another capital: After the Studio 104 concert in Paris on 20/3 and the Berlin shows in the middle of the week the tour now arrived at London's The O2. It was a double return for Peter Gabriel: the premiere of the new shows in his own country and also the return to the Millennium Dome where the OVO show used to be performed ten years ago. VIP ticket holder had to be there by 2pm, and a laminated soundcheck pass and the soundcheck t-shirt were given out. An hour later the fans were guided into the venue. The New Blood Orchestra had already tuned their instruments and rehearsed several brief parts with the conductor when Peter Gabriel scuffled onto the stage – in felt slippers, casual attire, a tea mug in his hand and perfectly relaxed. At one point he turned to the 400 VIP guests and greeted them with a good-humoured „Welcome to the soundcheck“. The fans then could watch the musicians rehearse for some 90 minutes while the sound technicians were working audibly on getting a grip on the resonances in the venue. When Peter Gabriel missed his cue at the end of San Jacinto the musicians discussed inserting a couple of extra bars to make it easier for Gabriel. This idea was successfully rehearsed. Later the soundcheck audience were asked to decide between three songs, only one of which would be played that night. Gabriel called Wallflower (big applause), Blood Of Eden (moderate applause) and Mercy Street (enthusiastic applause). After the vote they rehearsed Mercy Street in full.

The show itself began a few minutes past eight with Ane Brun. She played three songs, one of them her peculiar interpretation of Big In Japan. She stood right in front of the 10ft high LED screen that stretched all across the stage; behind it the orchestra had already taken their seats. Peter Gabriel gave a brief welcome speech in which is explained about the Scratch My Back project and also announced that the new album would be played in full.

Gabriel and the orchestra remained invisible for the first part of „Heroes“; only later did the LED screen rise some 15ft and revealed the musicians and the other three vertical LED walls that shows animations to illustrate the songs – and give the audience in the back rows the opportunity to see the artists in a close-up. Two additional back projection screens to the left and the right of the stage served the same purpose. Events onstage were captured by several cameras; a camera ball was lowered from the ceiling for the finale; Gabriel enjoyed playing around with it a lot – so much so that he almost wrecked a spotlight with it.

There was a lot to see and watch, as usual with Gabriel: sparse, but clever effects provided surprising moments. The LED wall was used in many different positions: at the top, at medium height or lowered to the stage like a curtain. For Listening Wind the horizontal LED screen picked up the images from the three rear screens and showed them as if it were scanning the bodies. The stickmen for The Book Of Love drew some laughter. Some of them wore Peter Gabriel's heads, which did not only look funny, but gave the story another sense. It was

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interesting to realize that these illustrations blended the – rather varied – Scratch songs into one big whole, as if that was needed to make the whole concept work.

The visual aspect was the biggest difference from the radio performance the week before. Despite the different orchestra it was musically very much the same – if anything, the New Blood Orchestra were a tad more at home with the material. The sound in the 14,000-seater was, of course, not as good as in Radio France's studio 104, but on the VIP seats near the stage one could still hear the un-amplified sound from the orchestra. It blended unobtrusively with the sound coming from the speakers mounted high up under the ceiling and the noticeable, but acceptable echo in the arena. The dynamic range was not nearly as large as in the radio concert, but the forte passages were all the more impressive; together with the bright light from the LED screens it seemed bombastic at points, but not over the top. One could not help but notice the mild weakness, that is the order of the Scratch My Back songs: the album becomes less exciting after *The Book Of Love* and a certain ennui spread. There was no real highlight anymore so it might have been more interesting to finish the first part of the show with, say, *The Power Of The Heart*.

The show continued after the break with a much-applauded *San Jacinto*, and it seemed that the musicians enjoyed the second half of the set better. Unfortunately one could hardly see the orchestra from the VIP seats. The wind instruments, double basses and the percussionist were hidden from sight by the musicians in front of them, and the screens seldom showed the musicians. It might have been a good idea to place the musicians in the rear on some kind of platform. Anyway, this did not take anything from the experience. *Washing Of The Water and Blood Of Eden* were not missed very much and the excellent *Mercy Street* got loud applause. *The Drop* was announced as „the song they had not messed up the last time and would therefore play again“; nobody really seemed to know what to do with the song, though, and *Wallflower* might have been the better choice. *Solsbury Hill* was a great finale to the main set; the musicians seemed a bit confused about the Beethoven bit that had been spliced in, as if all the „flame celestial“ had made them miss a beat. The encores were unspectacular just like the week before. Ane Brun noticeably held her horses for *In Your Eyes*, and Gabriel once again played the piano on *The Nest That Sailed The Sky* – almost unnoticed by the audience because he left stage left after *Don't Give Up* and came back stage right.

All in all it was a flawless concert with almost perfect sound and fascinating visuals in front of 14,000 people. Gabriel seemed to feel better at home on stage, particularly this stage, than in the Radio France studios. His calmness may have also come from the three other shows he played in Paris and Berlin. He did not tire to introduce some of the musicians by name, also mentioning the sound crew and the road crew. Arranger John Metcalfe, who conducted *In Your Eyes*, was also called back from and seemed very pleased with the well-deserved applause.

---Tom Morgenstern,genesis-news.com

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