Metallica - Odyssey Arena, Belfast, NIRE 2010



Disc one

That Was Just Your Life
The End Of The Line
For Whom The Bell Tolls
Creeping Death
Fade To Black
Broken, Beat And Scarred
Sad But True
Wherever I May Roam
Welcome Home (Sanitarium)

Disc Two

All Nightmare Long
One
Master Of Puppets
Blackened
Nothing Else Matters
Enter Sandman
Breadfan
Whiplash
Seek and Destroy

Belfast, May 11, 2010

Metallica gigs in Northern Ireland are a lot like buses. You wait 22 years for one, and then two come along at the same time. Each of the shows at Belfast's Odyssey Arena sold out within 24 hours when tickets went on sale last December. To say the atmosphere is electric is some kind

of monstrous understatement. The two-night stand is the US metal titans' first visit to Ulster since braving bomb scares and collapsing stage sets at the Antrim Forum in 1988.

There are 13 trucks parked round the back of the Odyssey, which have brought some 58 tons of tour equipment to Belfast. There is an in-the-round stage that takes up nearly the whole of the Odyssey's standing area, and enough pyrotechnics to start The Troubles II. Above us are lighting rigs shaped like coffins; around us speaker stacks the size of tanks.

On opening night, as support bands High on Fire (Venom without the songs) and Volbeat (Michale Graves-era Misfits without the songs) go through the motions, fans of all shapes and sizes fill up the arena.

There are grizzled old-timers who may not have seen the inside of a concert hall since that Antrim show, foreign diehards who religiously follow Metallica from one European enormo-dome to another (meet-and-greet videos posted later on YouTube reveal not a single Ulsterman or woman) and youngsters savouring their first gig.

As Metallica take the stage to customary intro 'The Ecstasy of Gold', they are so close we can see the whites of their eyes. 'Do you like heavy?' bellows frontman James Hetfield. 'Do you want heavy? Metallica gives you heavy, baby!'

Hetfield, drummer Lars Ulrich, lead guitarist Kirk Hammett and bassist Robert Trujillo rip into 'That Was Just Your Life' and 'The End of the Line' from latest album Death Magnetic, charging around like maniacs half their age. It's a powerful entrance, but sadly the new material is as weak live as it is on record. Not even a magnificent laser show can hide the fact that these are riffs in search of a song.

Just when the gig seems to be hurtling off the rails, 'For Whom the Bell Tolls', 'Creeping Death' and' Fade to MetallicaBlack' get old-school heads banging. Later, there are pummelling renditions of 'Sad but True', 'Wherever I May Roam', 'One', 'Master of Puppets', 'Blackened' and 'Enter Sandman'.

On the second night, Metallica add ‘Harvester of Sorrow’, ‘The Four Horsemen’ and ‘Battery’ (as well as ‘Fuel’ and ‘The Memory Remains’, but let’s pretend we didn’t hear those).

The encore is perhaps the highlight of each show. Tuesday gives us a cover of ‘Breadfan’ by Budgie, ‘Whiplash’ and ‘Seek and Destroy’, while Wednesday delivers Queen’s ‘Stone Cold Crazy’, ‘Hit the Lights’ and ‘Seek…’

During the closing number, dozens of inflatable beach balls branded with the Metallica logo are released from the ceiling, leading to fights for the prized keepsakes among some fans. The violence makes a mockery of Hetfield’s raps about ‘the Metallica family’, but it seems apt for a band whose debut album is called Kill ‘Em All. ---culturenorthernireland.org

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