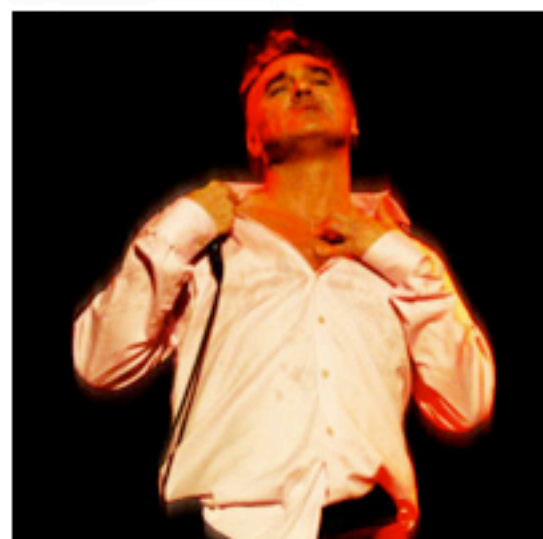




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Live Review

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:: Morrissey :: Doll & The Kicks ::

16 May 2009 / Cambridge Corn Exchange / Cambridge

By Liz Tray

Leading up to the show I hadn't been feeling that charitable towards Morrissey. The last two shows I had been scheduled to see had been abandoned and cancelled, respectively, due to his holiness's sore throat. Insistent on playing smaller venues, the only way to make them financially feasible must be to play more gigs per week than his voice can allow. So, every 20 shows or so, he'll have to let people down and I had been one such person. Checking online feverishly for evidence of his latest stubbed toe or broken nail, I left it to the last minute to make the trip to Cambridge.

Immediately, I could see why he favours town hall sized venues, as it soon became clear that the intensity and intimacy are unmatched. There was no shortage of odd characters to talk to and time passed quickly. Support act Doll & The Kicks were surprisingly good, received well by the famously uncharitable Morrissey hardcore. Then, a selection of strange little vignettes were projected onto the stage curtain - the comical video for Sparks latest single, Lighten Up Morrissey, a trashy, vintage, New York Dolls performance, a camp, leather-clad, Vince Taylor clip and a touch of 60s Shirley Bassey. Then, the curtain fell, the muscular sailor backdrop was visible and You'll Never Walk Alone dramatically heralded the entrance of the man and his band as the crush started. Pinned to the people surrounding me there was no way at all to move as the crowd surged, albeit good-naturedly.

"Good evening Cambridge, this is your starter for ten - no conferring". A searing opening blast of This Charming Man and Irish Blood, English Heart and a gasp for breath later, came the first raised eyebrow. "I have some disturbing news for you. You're all missing the Eurovision Song Contest. Dry those eyes." I sighed with relief as his fragile voice found itself and stayed strong and powerful for the rest of the night. Newer songs from his latest, Years of Refusal, prompted a little easing of the crush, with the punchy Black Cloud coming out particularly well, but with a setlist this varied there was little let up. From the gentle Why Don't You Find Out For Yourself to, my surprise hit of the night, obscure B-side The Loop. I was surprised the song choice was so Smiths heavy, with no less than six songs from that period. As you might imagine those songs, among them Ask and How Soon Is Now, were received with joy unconfined.

Most bands you see get up there, play the songs and, while you might enjoy it, you suspect it's not that different to any other show. With Morrissey you're confronted with dozens of unique incidents. One such was an abusive heckler, questioned until he squirmed, and then the show was stopped as bandleader Boz Boorer got in his face, throwing a few unrepeatable words in his direction. Apparently the heckler was later removed from the venue. The atmosphere was frenzied and the game of getting on stage began. I've never experienced this at other gigs as the fans with an eye on security and a foot on the barrier try to invade to hug or kiss the man himself. Given that this behaviour is encouraged it's no surprise that one brave soul made it up there to wrap his arms around Morrissey's ample waist. Another staple of the show is the removal of a sweaty shirt, which is then thrown to the baying masses. Viewing him as a younger man, one might not have imagined that, nearing 50, he would rip his shirt off, stripper style, to reveal a positively beefy physique.

I didn't want the show to end and after the last song, First of the Gang To Die, I peeled myself off those around me and, aching all over, stumbled out of the venue, floating and glowing. That's the paradox of Morrissey. He might let you down... but he'll never let you down.

RELEASES

- Codeine Velvet Club..
- Twizzle..
- The Hush Now..
- Daniel Land And The Modern Painters..
- Dead Confederate..
- Anthony Harris..
- The Lounges..
- Ex Wives..
- Heads We Dance..
- The Bambinos..
- Lost Prophets..
- Kid Harpoon..
- Slow Club..
- Basement Jaxx..
- Quartershade..
- The Duke & The King..
- Straight Lines..
- Spectrum 7..
- Dan Lyth..
- Beans On Toast..
- Thea Gilmore..
- Bicycle Thieves..
- Run Toto Run..
- Roy Smiles..
- Danny Mahon..
- Hayabusa..
- The Mekkits..
- Lazy Two..
- Lifeless..
- The Marder..
- Amateur Assassins..
- Husky Rescue..
- Asobi Seksu..
- Arrows Of Love..
- Blue Roses..
- The Twees..
- French For Cartridge..
- The Drums..
- Hammer No More the Fingers..
- New Education..

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