

Bryan Ferry Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver BC, April 5

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Photo: Kanako Misawa

By Brock Thiessen

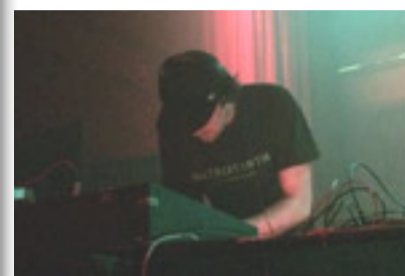
7 Knowing how to approach a Bryan Ferry show in 2014 isn't exactly easy. Will he deliver a night of big band jazz? Maybe do an all Dylan covers set? Or, as most fans would likely hope, dig into his decades of solo material and work with his iconic glam rock troupe Roxy Music? Luckily for those yearning for the latter, that's exactly what they got via Ferry's first stop of his "Can't Let Go Tour," a live spectacle that promised to roll out hits, rarities and a variety of highlights from the singer's 40-year-plus career.

Taking the stage at Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Theatre in a flower-adorned smoking jacket, 68-year-old Ferry set the tone of the night perfectly, launching into the lead-off track from Roxy Music's self-titled 1972 debut, "Re-Make/Re-Model." From there, it quickly became clear that this tour is packing a setlist longtime fans would kill for, delving deep into Ferry's catalogue for a greatest-hits set of the highest order.

As promised, key tracks from both Ferry's Roxy days and solo career came one after another — "2HB," "Slave to Love," "Ladytron," "Avalon," "Oh Yeah (There's a Band Playing on the Radio)," "The Same Old Blues," "If There Is Something" — with the healthy dose of Roxy Music tracks often stealing the show. To go along with them, the crowd got a meat and potatoes stage set-up of strobes, dry ice, multi-coloured spotlights and once — for whatever reason — a rotating projection of branches.

And while his old Roxy bandmates were not there in person, they were in spirit in an eight-member-strong backing band of musicians likely half Ferry's age. Throughout the night, each would get his or her moment in the spotlight via an array of soloing opportunities, whether it be courtesy of jaw-dropping sax player Jorja Chalmers, bass expert Guy Pratt, Phil Manzanera stand-in Jacob Quistgaard, or even the pair of bumblebee backup singers/dancers/hype women Bobbie Gordon and Jodie Scantelbury. In fact, one of the night's best moments came when Ferry wasn't even onstage, as his band led a truly beautiful, synth-loaded interlude complete with a wondrously moving oboe solo by

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Chalmers.

At times, though, this youthful backing band really did make Ferry look his age. Rarely was the singer an animated eye grabber, spending roughly half the show tucked away in the background by his keyboard. Unfortunately, his voice also no longer holds the brawny quaver it once had, instead often coming through via a thick sort of airy whisper — or at least on this opening night.

Still, it was hard not to get sucked into it all, especially when Ferry emerged front and centre and pulled some of his classic satirical playboy poses. Among the many highlights, Bill Murray favourite "More Than This" was delivered as a barroom piano ballad full of pure tenderness, *For Your Pleasure's* "In Every Dream Home a Heartache" became a moment of full-on psychedelic transcendence and "Love Is the Drug" got the entire theatre on their feet and moving in the rows.

It all ended with Ferry's 1976 hit "Let's Stick Together" leading into an encore of "Running Wild" and his much-loved cover of John Lennon's "Jealous Guy," which sounded as timeless as ever.

Was it all penthouse perfection? No, but few things ever are. Nevertheless, it served as a stunning reminder of just how great Ferry's songwriting has been over all these decades, more than earning him his rock legend status.

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I think this guy must have been to a different show to the one I & many others were at last night LOL

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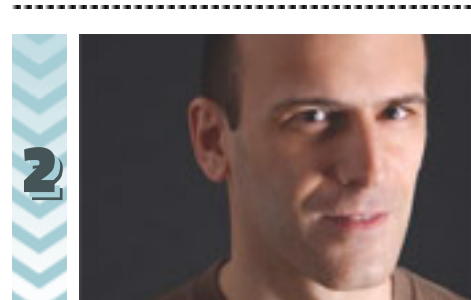
Diana Park APRIL 06, 2014
I bet it was kick ass!

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