

Machine Head @ Carling Academy, Birmingham, 3rd December 2003

Apologies if my memory's a bit muddled, but since it was machine head, I thought I should get in the spirit and partake of a few 'brown-eyes' throughout the evening. Bad idea, especially when combined with no sleep, and an empty stomach. The staff of the academy seemed to want us in and out as quickly as possible, since half way through breed 77 I looked at my watch and realised it was only 7:45. But for anyone who thought it was an 8pm start, relax- you didn't miss much. Whilst breed might be fairly competent musicians, they do seem a little mundane. The use of an electro-acoustic in a few songs certainly gives them a fresh twist, but they could quite easily be any other nu-grunge-post-metal band you could name. (especially the frontman, who we deemed to be the bastard lovechild of marky chavez and brandon boyd). Sikh on the other hand couldn't be mistaken for anyone else, except perhaps escapees of the local mental asylum. Even with a rather short set of only 6 or so songs, and a mix that can only be described as random (and therefore, somewhat appropriate), they play a belter. Like I said, I was just a little drunk, but after the fairly straight-forward introduction tape of 'emerson' I distinctly remember trying to keep up with the time-changes of 'hold my finger', 'pussyfoot', 'scent of the obscene' & 'skies of millenium night' among others. Mikee even manages to slip in a bit of his spoken word in the middle of the set, and we get the first cover of the evening in the form of maiden's 'wraithchild'. Machine head seem to get ripped quite a bit for their album performance, quite unfairly in my opinion. But live, only a numbskull could fault them. Live, it's loud, fast, and fun! Which, if we're honest, is all we really need. 'Imperium' was crafted by the gods as a set-opener. It's a statement of intent, a big fuck you to all those who doubted the 'head over the past few years, and it's simply the best track on 'through the ashes...'. Of course since robb think's that 'ashes' is the best thing they've ever done, so the set is weighed heavily in it's favour. 'Bite the bullet', 'elegy', and 'left unfinished' all put in an appearance in the main set, but no machine head gig would be quite right without a few of the oldies, "all the way back from '94" according to robb. So we get 'ten ton hammer', 'the blood, the sweat, the tears(/beers)', 'old', and 'take my scars' to keep the old thrashers happy. After a while I realised the early start may have been robb's doing, since the set seems to just keep on going. Finally they leave, but of course, everyone knows they're coming back out- I mean, they haven't even played 'davidian' yet! But we get more than just that. Maybe it's because it's wednesday that robb decides to borrow breed 77's acoustic for a sedate run through 'descend the shades of night' first. But then comes the fun- 'davidian' to start, and 'block' to end (or as robb appears to pronounce it, 'bollock'). And in the middle, ten ton hammer makes an appearance. Not the song again, but machine head's alternate identity covers band, who rip through maiden's 'number of the beast', and metallica's 'creeping death', with the occasional riff from 'sweet child of mine' thrown

About the Author

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