

Review of Jessie J- Hammersmith Apollo London, 1.11.2011

The hysteria, which had begun outside the venue hours before doors opened, was doubled as the fans entered the threshold and there was a near riot thanks to a combination of the particularly eager “heartbeats“ and poor crowd management. Alas, the madness died down soon enough marking the arrival of the first support act. Covering recent chart toppers, opening act Cherri V had the crowd moving. Unfortunately the change over to her own material provoked a less enthusiastic response, but she did a good job for an unknown artist playing to the mass of Londoners that had completely filled the Apollo for the night. Next up was Devlin. Essex born, the young rapper already has a multitude of followers and is massive in his genre, having made the significant jump from the depths of the underground grime scene to the heights of “top 40“ stardom. Even for those unfamiliar with Devlin, there“s no denying the boy has talent. The majority of his set is played with a live band and backing singer; however, Devlin“s skills truly shine when he switches to acapella. The speed and rhythm of his verses are impressive, his timing impeccable and lyrics meaningful. He“s likable too; thanking everyone for their applause and he comes across a hard-working kid just trying to do what he loves and grateful to be getting somewhere. Jessie J begins with an unlikely opener, Big White room; an emotional and personal power ballad, written by her seventeen year old self recounting her childhood experience in a hospital ward. That“s one of the things so many people love about her; she“s not afraid to bare her soul through her music and addresses subjects that have had a profound effect on her – a welcome contrast to the songs that glorify party culture which have been dominating the pop chart for years. For the first few minutes, Jessie is focused and not interacting with the crowd much; maybe it“s just nerves or maybe she“s just getting into the swing of things, warming up, as it were. For an artist that released her debut album only a year ago, she“s never short of material; she“s been in the industry for a long time, having written over 600 songs since first being signed when she was sixteen as part of a girl group, following studying at the renowned BRIT school. Jessie was never destined to be one face in a manufactured band, having to compromise on her look and musical style, because with raw talent, star quality and creativity like hers, she would have been the “Beyonc“ of the group from the off. Understandably, music producers recognised her potential instantly. But if they hadn“t, it would have been only a matter of time before someone else did. The set list offers a balanced mix of heartfelt ballads and upbeat tracks that have the fans dancing. In order to ensure she performs a full set, she“s included a few covers, Bob Marley“s One love and Never too much by Luther Van Dross that she dedicates to the family member“s that have come out to see her tonight. The crowd are also treated to a new song, “My Shadow“;, which raises the fan“s already dangerously high expectations for the follow up album. The peak of the excitement came when James Morrison, one of Britain“s most credible singer-songwriters, was introduced to give an exclusive performance of their duet Up. Morrison“s soulful tone paired with Jessie“s effortless vocal is a brilliant combination and the chemistry between the two is stunning. Jessie willingly lets the 5000 strong audience see into her personal life during an acoustic rendition of L.O.V.E. Glancing up to the front row where her loved ones sit, and after changing the neutral pronoun in the song to “she“;, Jessie happily shouts “and you can put that in the paper“ in reference to the media“s inevitable obsession with her sexuality. The cheers heard at this point, not only from her gay fans, but from the entire crowd, echo around the venue. There is something about her that causes everybody to just want her to be happy and do well. Her honesty and genuine gratitude is terribly endearing and, unlike many that have rose to fame as quickly as she, Jessie has maintained her humility and appears to be amusingly down to earth. Through chatting with her band mates and humouring the audience with her adorable yet clumsy demeanour, a trait that put her out of action for several months whilst she recovered from a broken foot, it is apparent that she is just a normal twenty three year old that is a lot more relatable than the majority of superficial stars of today“s music scene. Labelled by Justin Timberlake as one of the “best singers in the world right now“;, he“s not far off. Jessie J is a rare talent, one that Britain should be ridiculously proud to call their own. Her performance tonight has proved that her vocal is near perfect and it seems she never fails to deliver. From here, the only way is up.

About the Author

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