

Babyshambles @ Brixton Academy

No drugs; Near death… and Nearly Fisticuffs? Yes, it’s Babyshambles at Brixton! You can feel the tension as you walk down the queue, 5,000 people queuing up to see their idol, Pete Doherty, bright-eyed and bush-tailed, straight from rehab, and the early nights his 10pm curfew must enforce. After a string of no-shows, the question is Will He Be Here? But with his bail conditions lifted for one-night only allowing him to play until midnight, there’s talk of this being the new Libertines at the Forum (a must-see for anyone who doesn’t know.) The crowd buzzes, as members trade stories about meetings with Pete, shows they’ve seen and the general rumour that tonight’s the night there will be an emotional on-stage reunion between Pete and his former Libertines’ band-mate and best friend, Carl Barât. Having queued longer for merchandise that we did to get in and brandishing our newly purchased PETE IS INNOCENT (and so is Alan Wass) tees, we headed into the academy. The crowd is Camden’s chicest, plus public school-boys and media-savvy gurus, all eager to see Grot n Roll’s hottest property. The first band on are the Paddingtons. Looking like a cross between the Vines’ Craig Nicholls with the mannerisms of Pulp’s Jarvis Cocker, they storm the stage, proving they are worthy of the headline spot. Front man, Tom Atkins, is a classic rock n roll cliché. With his crack-head hair cut, swagger and cigarettes between his lips between songs, their blunt punkism quickly wins over an audience, who, let’s face it, are going to be hostile to anything that standing in the way of them and their hero. Best song is whatever the one that goes “l’m a loser if you say so (say so honey)”. Halfway through the next support act, we decide to venture to the front. The crowd are growing impatient, screaming when Pete appears briefly tantalisingly onstage before the third act, confirming at least for those in the crowd who have come from as far away as Wales, that he will perform tonight. Former Clash star and Libertines producer Mick Jones introduces Babyshambles, hinting the band are about to hit the recording studios to begin work on their anticipated debut album, put on hold after Pete’s run in with the law, and drummer Gemma Clarke’s departure. Killamangiro is the opener – the crowd erupts. This is the band’s most well known song to date, a single just denting the top 20. With an eclectic audience of hardcore Pete fanatics and people curious about the hype, it’s a clever choice. All hell breaks lose three songs in, when the band are forced to stop after things at the front get chaotic. Being crushed between a pile of people twice your size and the mixture of sweat and beer on the floor is not fun, as we soon discover. While some kind souls attempt to pull us from the wreckage, other more opportunists among the crowd seize the chance to get closer to Pete. This is Pete’s big chance to prove to all those who ever called him a skag-head that he’s more than just Kate Moss’ junkie bit of rough, and he’s not going to let a little bit of over excited crushing stop him. He carries on with strong songs, such as The Man Who Came To Stay, Fuck Forever, and Gang of Gin, which is interrupted when his angry guitarist, Patrick Walden, swings a fist at him, resulting in a brief punch up. Song of the night is definitely Fuck Forever, and Pete’s obsessive Englishness comes to the fore with the polite lyric “Fuck Forever… if you don’t mind.” The set finishing at 11 0’clock on the dot, ensuring Pete is safely home in accordance with his midnight curfew. The night ended on a high, proving that if the band can keep it together long enough, the future of the British music scene could well belong to Babyshambles.

About the Author

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