

Tina Turner @ The O2 Arena (7th March 2009)

She has sold more concert tickets than any other artist, and despite not playing the UK since 2000, Tina Turner still remains unquestionably one of the most popular performers of all time. She may have been pushing 50 when most of us were even born; an age in itself quite rightfully acceptable as retirement for a performer. But here is the sixties soul icon unbelievably in her 70th year taking to the stage one final time in celebration of her 50th anniversary in the business. But age is only a number according to Turner, and rightfully so as although being out of sight in recent years, she certainly isn't out of shape! Donning plunging necklines, micro-mini dresses and commanding the stage in only the finest Louboutins, it is clear to see the singer's infamous Amazonian figure is only but extenuated, with her curves and notorious 'insured for millions' pins really making anyone question 'how can this woman be almost 70?'. Backed by a seven-piece band, three backing singers, four dancers and four performing ninjas, the 'Queen of Rock'n'Roll' powers through a 21-song, two-hour set as part of her US and European tour that kicked off last October. Most importantly her time off hasn't affected her raspy growl and is evidentially ferocious as ever as she opens with the rather provocative 'Steamy Windows' and soon after huskily belts out 'River Deep, Mountain High'. From the off, we are reminded just how astonishingly powerful Turner's voice is, how it oozes effortless sultry soul. So much so that very few voices can even rival it. Few from the past and most likely few ever again. Turner, more renowned for her powerhouse performances rather than her records post-Ike, certainly knows how to play to her strengths and only exudes sheer vivacity from yet another turbo-charged live show. Extravagantly staged, eccentrically yet expertly choreographed, Turner delivers a crowd-pleasing set. Notably dated in accordance with her unlikely 80's comeback and therefore around her more classic of hits such as the poignant 'Private Dancer' and 'What's Love Got To Do With It', it takes 'We Don't Need Another Hero' to truly capture the reflective journey of the show with Turner stepping out in a replica of the dramatic toreador costume she wore in the 1985 movie 'Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome'. Along with the favourites, Turner throws a few covers in there for good measure. Although her version of The Beatles' 'Help!' is considerably tenderer than the original, being just that makes it dubious. Also, despite a rather superfluous medley as tribute to The Rolling Stones as the band that propelled Ike & Tina into recognition, such incompetence only emphasises Turner's charismatic and energetic nature allowing it to engage and ultimately excel. However, her sensationally gritty soulful rendition of Al Green's 'Let's Stay Together' is everlastingly brilliant. From the jazzed up Ann Peebles' 'I Can't Stand the Rain' to seductively soaring through the 1995 James Bond theme 'Golden Eye', it's the timeless pub party anthem 'The Best', that had even those stuck at the back of the O2 spectacularly dancing like it truly was the eighties. But to draw the show to an end and perhaps to significantly capture what the whole tour is about, Turner revisits the songs where it all started in her Ike & Tina days. Bellowing through 'Proud Mary', Turner is breathtaking. With pristine vocal prowess and dancing as animated as her basically naked gyrating dancers who together could quite possibly make up Turner's age alone, the result is an effectively wowed sold out 20,000 capacity that filled the arena. And so, she finishes where she begins, 30 feet in the air on a mechanical scaffold. There is a strange evocative hysteria in the air as she hovers over the crowd excitingly demanding every last fan help belt her own signature penned hit 'Nutbush City Limits'. Surely this can't be it for Tina. With her impressive physique and with her strikingly powerful and charming nature, who's to say this influential music icon can't come out of retirement for a second time years from now and still be as fabulous.

About the Author

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