
CSN rocks Birmingham England (no bombs involved)

“It was the second show that we did “ said the white-haired gentleman with the ’52 Telecaster slung low, during the encore presentation... it took me a second to figure out that he was talking about a “little known” event in rock music history that happened in ‘69, sub-



titled “3 days of peace and music”. The man was Graham Nash, and he was about to sing one of his greatest hits, “Woodstock”, with his friends David Crosby and Stephen Stills. At the risk of losing my voice for a couple of days, I cheered as loud as I could. As the trio belted out the initial notes, Stills motioned to the “stiff upper lipped” crowd to get on their feet... and they promptly did. From my 3rd row seat in the arena, I couldn’t resist it either, so I clambered over the two rows of seats in front of me and moved to the music, at arms length from the great triumvirate of harmony.

Though I ended up in prime position at the concert, my journey to those coveted seats was not without its share of drama. As I am was in England and didn’t have

a really established presence, I had my tickets delivered to Monica, one of the secretaries at my project site. I called the ticketing agency the day before the concert and was told that the tickets had been delivered to the mail room. They did not have the name of the person that signed for it. But Monica had not received anything yet. I went down to the mailroom armed with my delivery tracking number, and they were able to track down the fact that the envelope had been delivered at about 10:30 PM, which matched the ticketing agency’s record.

However, the tickets were still untraceable. I double-checked with Monica to no avail. She said that the mail room had promised to send out a group email to everyone in the office to see if they could track it down. But my hopes of getting my hands on the tickets were on a downward spiral by then. But minutes before the workday ended, like an angel divine, Monica appears in our project room with the prized envelope in her hand. She had just discovered the envelope in her mail as she was clearing up her desk at the end of the day. My fists naturally pumped.

They began with “Carry On”, a staple from the CSN portfolio, and moved on to “Marrakesh Express”, a tune that I hadn’t heard until the day before, when I checked out their “free CD” offering with the “Daily Mail” newspaper. I only bought the paper because of the CD, and it was a treat to listen to. I concluded that the CD was a recording of one of their earlier shows on the tour, as the trio belted out songs almost in the same order as on the disc.

For a concert for a major act like CSN, the venue was pretty intimate. Though the house was packed, there could only have been around a thousand people there that night. The woman behind me was practically having a conversation with the band, talking back to them whenever they said something in between the songs. Some of the interchanges were funny.

Graham Nash, introducing one of his newer songs: "I usually write songs pretty quickly.. but this one took me 4 years to write"

Woman behind me (in British accent): "That was pretty quick!"

Nash: "Very funny"

At another break, Nash goes, making fun of the English summer: "You blink, and you miss the summer in England".

Crosby adds: "Last time I was here, I went to the bathroom, and the summer was gone".

Woman behind me: "What were you doing?" Crosby (with a mischievous smile): "None of your damn business"

During the interludes, CSN managed to get their political views across too. A sticker on one of their keyboards said "Lick Bush in 04", obviously a relic from last years US presidential election campaign. Bush, and occasionally Blair took the occasional hits to their respective intelligence quotients.

Back to the music... As is customary, the concert went from old hits to newer songs and back to old ones again. And though some of those new songs may never see daylight again, they were all performed flamboyantly, with Stephen Stills going wild with the guitar every now and then. David Crosby acted like he was doing an informal jam session, lounging around with his hands in his

pockets and ambling up to the microphone to sing backup on the Nash/Stills songs. He also turned in impressive performances with "Almost Cut My Hair" and "Guinevere" which prompted the conversationalist behind me to remark, "Like a good wine, (he) gets better with age". Introducing "Love the One you will", Nash asked the crowd to sing along, saying that they would know when to. And sure enough, the audience joined in to sing the title line, and the famous "tu ru tu tu" chorus. "Southern Cross" was beautifully performed as well, as an acoustic version, with Stills once again taking the front man role. So far, I had thoroughly enjoyed myself.

From "Woodstock", the encore moved on to the one song that I had been waiting to hear, and sing along all evening.. "Teach Your Children". Of course, everyone in the audience wanted to join in as well, so it did not end up quite as a "Crosby, Stills, Nash and Choyi" Song, there were several more voices involved, including Crosby's 11 year old son Django, a long haired miniature version of David, without the signature mustache, of course (well, not yet ..).

I had seen CSN with Y (Neil Young) on their CSNY2000 tour and had been verily impressed with their ability to rock back then. The 5 years that had passed since appeared to have stood still in their lives, because, once again they demonstrated that they could harmonize perfectly, produce mean guitar riffs and get audiences up on their feet to take in the spirit of their music. The band may not be Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young anymore, but it could well be, Crosby, Stills and Nash ARE "Young".