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Duffy, Bush Hall, London

6th March, 2008



I always enjoy going to see gigs at Bush Hall. Intimate and ornate with atmospheric lighting and great sound, it usually makes for a special night. But on this wintry Thursday the mood of the crowd seems a little off. My friend and I politely wind our way through the clusters of waiting people to find a vantage point reasonably near the front, pursued by a chorus of tuts and sighs. The crowd are typically in their mid to late 30s, well off, sinking beakers of white wine and holding forth on how good Duffy is.

Feeling distinctly unwelcome, we wait for her big entrance as various hits from the 60s play over the speakers. A couple of men in front of me are here with their young teenage daughters and embarrass them by jiving around to Dusty Springfield with wide smiles. Finally, Duffy's well dressed six piece band take up position and the lady herself walks out grinning.

"We're celebrating the release of the album this week", she says in a soft voice, "I don't know how to feel about it really other than to enjoy it".

Blue light streams down as the band launch in to 'Rockferry', a slow burning, atmospheric number which puts Duffy's slow vibrato to marvellous use. Accompanied by acoustic guitar, bass, drums, percussion and electric guitar she revels in the big sound and works the crowd brilliantly, shimmying and throwing her right hand up in the air passionately. As the last chords fade away, she turns to the audience, wide-eyed. "Has anyone been to Rockferry? Great - what's it like?"



Next up is 'Warwick Avenue'. Duffy's voice flips between soft anguish and soaring passion as she breathes the emotion of the end-of-relationship song in to the room, all the while clearly excited and pleased to be performing. The band do a stellar job, throwing themselves in to the music, grooving away and smiling to each other. 'Hanging On Too Long' is sassy and defiant, with a 'Heard It Through The Grapevine' groove and a touch of the young Lulu or Lesley Gore about the melodies. A subdued musical breakdown complete with organ wobble smashes back in to a pretty heavy section towards the end. It all sounds great.

(page 1 of 2)

[next >](#)



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