

Music | Bittles' Magazine: The music column from the end of the world

In Belfast we are somewhat starved of concerts by people you would actually pay money to go see. Local ›talent‹ and terrible tribute bands seem to make up the majority of the gig-goer's choice here. And, when someone does decide to make the short trip over the Irish sea it tends to be people like **McBusted** or **Nicki Minaj** who aren't going to excite anyone over the age of twelve. By **JOHN BITTLES**

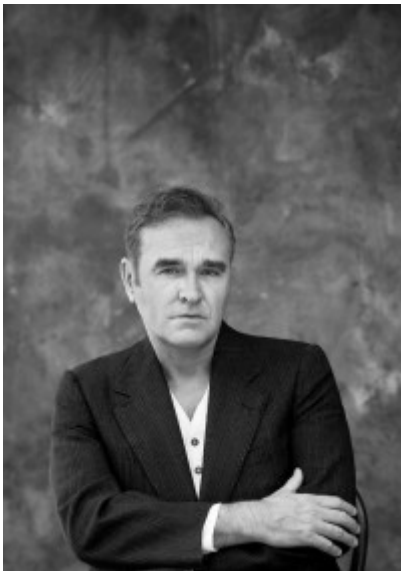


Foto: Universal Music

So, when it was announced that Mr *Suedehead* himself, **Morrissey** was going to be playing in our fair city I must admit that my heart did a little leap of glee. Sure he was playing at *The Odyssey*, a huge soulless venue built for sporting events and shows like *Disney On Ice*, yet for any music fan in Northern Ireland this was like a dream come true.

After a few years in the musical wilderness **Morrissey** returned last year with the epic and rather wonderful *World Peace Is None Of Your Business*. The album saw the singer beef up his sound, re-politicize his lyrics, and produce one of the LPs of the year. Not since 2004's *You Are The Quarry* has **Morrissey** sounded this vitalised, energetic and like the rock God [we all know him to be](#).

Signs were good then that this tour was going to be something very special indeed. By the time I arrived there was already a real sense of anticipation building in the venue, only slightly lessened by one of the door staff attempting to confiscate my umbrella lest I attempt to throw it at the stage. The crowd were a good mix of the young and the old, lonely men in **Morrissey** t-shirts, couples holding hands, and the odd hipster who seemed to have walked in by mistake.

The support act **Buffey Sainte-Marie** brought a bundle of enthusiasm and energy to her performance, doing more than enough to entertain the milling crowd. At times folkie, at others loud and raucous, the singer could well be the most rock n' roll 74 year old you will ever meet. Like a cross between **Joan Jett**, **Janis Joplin** and **Eddie Van Halen**, her short set seemed like it was beamed straight from the sixties. Yet, it still engaged through seasoned musicianship, **Buffey's** winning onstage presence and sheer force of will. It did look like she was enjoying every single minute of her time in the spotlights, so after some early indifference, the crowd

thought »Well, if she's enjoying herself this much then why shouldn't we?« The lager had also started to kick in by then!



After a strange musical video and audio collage reminiscent of a sixth-form art project, **Morrissey** and his band strode onstage to a backdrop of the Queen giving everyone the finger. This served as an intense political statement and a great way to prove that the singer does have a sense of humour after all. From the off the one and a half hour set seemed to be made up of hit after hit after hit. An anthemic *The Queen Is Dead* and a euphorically received *Suedehead* opened the show with a double dose of classics that immediately produced air punches, full-throttled singing, and a sea of smiles from the audience.

Staircase At The University was the first of many from **Morrissey's** latest album, *World Peace Is None Of Your Business* and ably held its own against the earlier classics. The song's lyrics concerning the pressures of university life still managed to touch a nerve even though most of the crowd were of an age where the perils of exams and parental pressure were but a distant memory. »If you don't get three As, her sweet daddy said, you're no child of mine, and as far as I'm concerned, you're dead!« **Morrissey** intoned, with just the right mixture of deadpan delivery and pathos.

What quickly became apparent throughout an entertaining show is how much of a natural front-man **Morrissey** is. For the entirety of the gig he positively oozed charisma, and even though he kept banter to a minimum, he seemed immensely comfortable and at ease on the huge stage. So much so, in fact, that at some points it even looked as if the world-renowned miserablist was even enjoying himself.

Yet, it wasn't all about the star! The sound was perfect, while the lighting and visuals worked well, (especially during a breath-taking yet visually disturbing *Meat Is Murder*). Lyrics of »And the calf that you carve with a smile, is MURDER. And the turkey you festively slice, is MURDER«, were accompanied by dramatic red lighting and a gruelling video of animal slaughter and ill-treatment. A stomach churning moment for sure, yet one that completely mesmerised the entire crowd.



The backing band were thoroughly excellent throughout. The long, instrumental outro for the aforementioned *Meat Is Murder* sent goosebumps up and down the spine through its dirge-like groove, while the final flurry of activity which brought *I'm Not A Man* to a close was easily one of the highlights of the night. Dressed in matching outfits, and with an abundance of talent, they proved the perfect foil for **Morrissey's** showmanship.

It is hard to pick highlights from the show since only towards the end did the quality begin to subside. Special mention must be made though of a truly sublime rendition of *Everyday Is Like Sunday* which brought a flurry of nostalgic tears to the eyes. *Scandinavia* bristled with a sense of righteous indignation, while *Earth Is The Loneliest Planet* worked splendidly with its world-weary air amid a flurry of Spanish guitars. *The World Is Full Of Crashing Bores*, meanwhile, was such a beautiful moment, with our hero in full voice, that it is likely to go down as one of those ›I was there‹ moments, of which we get to experience so few.

An encore of *Irish Blood*, *English Heart* was greeted with such a wave of glee and enthusiasm that it threatened to bring the roof down. As it ended **Morrissey** extravagantly threw his shirt into the crowd and strode off the stage leaving it to the drummer to bring things to a theatrical close by taking his pent-up frustrations out on his drum-kit. A dramatic end to a heart-stopping show.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)