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Greg Lake

May 18, 2012
Orpheum Theatre
Los Angeles, CA



Review by Shawn Perry
Photos by [Ron Lyon](#)

When I interviewed Greg Lake in February (2012), the singer, bassist and guitarist said his upcoming U.S. tour would be an opportunity for him to share his "musical journey" with his audience. Indeed, my own personal history with Lake's music has been an ongoing journey since April 6, 1974, the day I first laid eyes on Emerson, Lake & Palmer at the biggest concert of their career — the California Jam.

I cannot underestimate the impact that ELP had on my perception of music. For me, they opened up a world that was more versatile and more colorful than a mere three chords from a guitar. And there were only three of them! That was a bonus because I had consistently zoned in on three-piece bands for years — Cream, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the first incarnation of Grand Funk Railroad and ZZ Top. There was a good reason these groups were all considered power trios; regarding ELP, the tag was only too fitting. Looking back, however, they actually had a bigger sound than most bands with twice the personnel.

For 2012, Greg Lake scaled back the grandiose, over-the-top elements of ELP for his one-man *Songs Of A Lifetime* show. During our second chat in early May, Lake told me the tour had been going well. "I don't think I anticipated the amount of feeling and emotion coming off the audience," he enthused. In a nutshell, *Songs Of A Lifetime* takes you through Lake's extensive history with King Crimson and ELP — accentuated with bits of supplemental instrumentation to fill out the arrangements, along with stories and Q&A sessions.

Having seen Lake with Keith Emerson two years before at the Orpheum Theatre in Los Angeles, I was aware of how these songs, played in an intimate setting, assume an extra special dimension. Upon his return to the very same venue, Lake employed many of the same embellishments used before. With the singer's voice and guitar at the ready, the sound warmed over the stately space of the Orpheum, adding just enough traction to keep the starkness astray.

If the staging was any indication, fans were surely in for a treat. Multiple guitars and road cases marked 'Greg Lake London' dotted the scene. The lone keyboard at stage left had some speculating about a special guest (Keith Emerson lives right down the

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street). Once the lights lowered and strains of "Moonchild" coupled with a swab of Kanye West's "Power" (which samples "21st Century Schizoid Man") started to build, Lake appeared and took over where the rapper left off, adhering to the more traditional arrangement of the King Crimson classic.

A delightful "Lend Your Love To Me Tonight," from **Works, Vol. 1**, followed, lifting spirits before the beloved "From The Beginning" came a-knocking and put everyone at ease as Lake's warm tenor nurtured a homespun feeling amongst the assembled. The stage was now set for the first of many stories.

Before and after the singer delivered three more King Crimson numbers — "Epitaph," "In The Court Of The Crimson King" and "I Talk To The Wind" — he touched upon two major influences in his life: Elvis Presley and the Beatles. Lake talked about seeing Presley in 1970 and played his hollow-body electric for a cool rendition of "Heartbreak Hotel." He also told the audience he saw the Beatles in England and toured with Ringo Starr in 2001. He asked the crowd to sing along with the Beatles' "You've Got To Hide Your Love Away" and that finished off the first set.

The second set began with "Touch And Go," but it was Lake's acoustic spin on ELP's "Trilogy" that caught the attention of the diehards. The song was only played live a handful of times during the band's heyday, so to hear it tonight definitely brought a few smiles. After a stellar reading of "Still...You Turn Me On," Lake opened up the floor to questions. One man told Lake that he and his wife had met at the California Jam, while another asked if the singer if he was going to play "Nuclear Attack" from his first solo album. "Not without Gary Moore," Lake answered, who acknowledged that the guitarist who worked with him in the early 80s had sadly passed away in 2011.

Lake reached way back and performed a titillating version of Johnny Kidd and the Pirates' "Shakin' All Over." He talked about living in Paris, which led to one of his most enchanting songs, the French-flavored "C'est La Vie." The iconic song Lake wrote as a small boy and recorded for ELP's debut album — "Lucky Man" — followed. As the set came to a close, the mystery of the lone keyboard was resolved when the man himself took a place behind it to play and sing a striking adaptation of Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready."

That left the encore, which Lake used to roll out "Karn Evil 9, 1st Impression, Part 2," aka "Welcome Back My Friends To The Show That Never Ends..." The canned drums and keyboards filtered in just enough to keep it real. And at the center, Greg Lake sang and played bass as confidently and assured as he had when Emerson and Palmer joined him on stage.

For me, the evening ended on a personal high note when I got to meet Lake as well as ELP curator Tony Ortiz, [ELP Digest](#) editor John Arnold and Karen McCarthy Travis, whose father designed the flying piano Keith Emerson strapped himself to at the California Jam. It was incredible to share ELP thoughts and memories with so many like-minded individuals. As time goes on, opportunities like these become more meaningful and coveted. Thanks to Greg Lake, I think we realized that the songs we heard tonight are a big part of all our lifetimes.



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