



GREG LAKE

Liverpool Philharmonic

20TH NOVEMBER 2012

A very different show to the heady days of ELP extravaganzas this, indeed a change of pace even from his most recent solo tours. This tour was the Songs From A Lifetime show, which features Greg in a fairly intimate atmosphere, playing various songs both from his career and also those which influenced him, and introducing a storytelling element with audience interaction.

The grand old Philharmonic theatre in Liverpool provides the perfect setting for this quietly civilised evening's entertainment, and entertaining it proves to be indeed. Some may have had issue with the fact that backing tapes were used, but I find such criticisms unduly harsh, as this was clearly billed, and the focus is at all times on Greg's guitar playing and still-impressive voice. The material ranged from King Crimson (most of the debut album is showcased), to a wide selection of his own ELP contributions – C'Est La Vie, From The Beginning and Still...You Turn Me On are clear highlights here, though the unaccompanied rendition of the classic seasonal song I Believe In Father Christmas also possesses considerable charm. Mention must also go to the lighting, which was very effective, and quite dramatic in parts, and enhanced the music superbly.

Equally important in tonight's performance, however, is the whole 'stories behind the music' concept, and Greg proves himself quite the raconteur, as he sits casually on a speaker cabinet to engage the audience in a casual yet utterly engaging manner – his story about an Elvis show in Vegas is marvellously told. The second half of the show contains a 'question and answer' session with members of the audience, which combines the odd poignant tale with genuinely funny moments, and it is this impromptu element which in some ways provides the true highlight of the evening.

This show is something of a triumph for Greg, as he reinforces his fine musical gifts while introducing a talent for storytelling reminiscent of a certain Mr Wakeman, in a cosy atmosphere which would never have been possible in the globe-straddling heyday of the ELP beast. A fine evening's entertainment which was thoroughly enjoyed by all, judging by the applause and the comments I heard afterwards. Well played, sir.

WORDS & PHOTO: STEVE PILKINGTON