

## Groningen, The Netherlands, 26th October

By Rudy Offereins

On 26 October, 2003 Camel played its last concert of the Farewell Tour in the Netherlands in the Oosterpoort in Groningen. For me it was the second Camel concert, having seen them in 2000 in this same venue. The crowd of listeners contained age-classes varying from about 20 to close to 65 (I was standing next to which one who vividly 'air-drumming' to the intro of the opening song). To my surprise (although I could have read this on several websites) The band not included Guy LeBlanc on keyboards sound but our very own Scherpenzeel, which was for me the first opportunity to see him play. Andy Latimer looked rather pale and as it turned out suffered from a cold ('I got it in Spain of all places') but it did not seem to affect the vocals he did.

The band kicked off with the impressive epic *Lady*, many a-time the encore of a concert *Fantasy!* If they opened with this song, would follow what else? Compared to the former concert I attended the sound of the band seemed more powerful and indeed louder, which fitted fine with some of the more heavy songs they played. The band played tight and enthusiastic and very much enjoyed themselves, only sound Scherpenzeel kept the same facial expression during the dependent. Apart from *Lady Fantasy* every song was introduced by either Andy or Colin Bass. This resulted in some hilarious moments as Andy was halfway an introduction for a song when Collin came to tell him that another song was to be played and even handed Andy his glasses. At which point Andy sighed that 'getting old really sucks'.

The songs were a nice mix Of rather complex and up-tempo One's like Unevensong and Echoes and songs with lots of room for Andy's brilliant guitar-playing (*Lawrence, Ice*). *Hymn to Her* was the only song which was totally new for me and it sounded great. The show had a lot of resemblance with the the first disc of *Never Let Go* live double-album and only *Earthrise* and *City of Live* disc that were not played here. One could say that too often *Rhayader* is played by the band (I 've got it on three different live albums) but to my surprise I was really enjoying it and the band played it with much (and contagious) enthusiasm.

The same for Drafted which still got me goose-bumps at the point where the drums joined Andy's guitar-playing. It proves for me that the music of Camel is really timeless and songs like this still standing after more than 25 years. Some songs included 'band history'; *Hymn to Her* as the song they were rehearsing when Collin Bass joined the band and *Spirit of the Water* was played in honor of the late Peter Bardens, fellow-founder of the band who passed away in January last year.

From the latest album '*A Nod and a Wink*' they first played *Fox Hill*, with a starring role for Collin who gave his best on vocals which was quite amusing if you know the song. This song was followed by their debut album from *Arubaluba* ('hold on to your hats'), an impressive live song which surely showed the heavy side of Camel and in my opinion got the loudest applause of the evening.

This time the starring role was for Dennis Clement on drums ... The last song before the encore was from their latest album *For Today* with very emotional guitar-playing by Andy and a standing ovation after the song was finished. Goose-bumps all over.

The only encore was the well-chosen song *Never Let Go*. This song is featured live on both '*A Live Album*' and the aforementioned '*Never Let Go*' but in quite different versions. This time it was played more close to the former, including solos from Colin and Dennis in the middle section. After this song the band members took the applause and left stage without further speech though you could see that especially Andy had a bit of a hard time.

Thus ended the last live show of Camel in the Netherlands after 2 hours and 15 minutes. It's ironic that their 30th anniversary tour is called the 'farewell tour', and it's a shame that a band who often used on the outcome of album as an excuse for intensive touring should stop doing so because of logistic and financial reasons. It was fun seeing them play live and I will miss their enthusiasm. But then again as Andy said during the concert: 'one may never know and that's a beautiful thing, is not it? "