

London, UK, 28th October

By Charlie Farrell

Penultimate date of Camel's Farewell Tour

Camel had originally planned their farewell European excursion for the early summer, but were forced to re-scheduled it for the autumn instead. The London date was originally the final date of the tour, but the date sold out in advance of the tour starting and so even further UK dates were slotted in, with Milton Keynes arranged for the day before this gig and the real final at Sheffield the following day.

The lineup of the band has changed a great deal over the years and only Andrew Latimer of the original line-up remains. He is joined by long-time bass player Colin Bass, Canadian drummer Dennis Clement and Dutch keyboardist Ton Scherpenzeel, but the band that their equipment would produce at ensured authentic 1970's sound by bringing with them a couple of Vox AC30 amplifiers for use with Andy's guitars and a Leslie cabinet for the keyboards.

The band made a good attempt at covering something from all of their albums, spanning around 30 years. They started with the awesome *lady fantasy* from **Mirage**. "Thanks so much for the fantastic welcome. Its great to be back in London after Spain" (where all the band got sick), Andy Latimer declared, clearly moved by the reaction from the sold-out Astoria crowd. He then introduced "A song from Rain Dances", namely *Unevensong* before telling the story of how the band first encountered Colin Bass, by way of introducing *Hymn to Her*.

The little stories and reminiscences (even if they had been repeated each night of the tour) were well selected and neatly tied the songs together while giving little insights into the changes and developments throughout the band's career. "Peter Bardens and I went to the hills in Devon, smoked loads of drugs and kinda eeked out this piece," said Latimer, by way of introducing "A couple of pieces from **The Snow Goose**", to the inevitable huge cheers. I do not think that the audience were terribly surprised by the fact that perhaps the band's most successful album was composed the influence of mind-altering substances but the cheers which greeted the end of the medley *Rhyader* confirmed that the audience still under have a great affection for **The Snow Goose**.

Having mentioned Peter Bardens while introducing the Rhyader medley, Andy continued by saying that he passed away in January of this year and that the band were dedicating part of the set to him. "It's a song he wrote, this is called *Spirit of the water*." It appeared that the crowd stood in quiet reverence sound while playing shone Scherpenzeel throughout the song. He played some delightful Piano and harpsichord-ish sounds while accompanying Andy and his guitar. Possibly the high point of the set for me.

After *Ice*, possibly featuring Andy Latimer's finest guitar solo of the evening, Andy had another dedication to old bandmate to. This time it was Andy Ward, the band's old drummer, (who was supposed to be in the audience) to whom dedicated the jazzy *Arubaluba* Andy Latimer from the band's very first album.

Having covered the band's 70's output, the band played some more recent material in the shape of *Mother Road* and two tracks from the band's current album [A Nod And A Wink](#), *Fox Hill* and the closing number *For Today*. Andy Latimer introduced the final song as follows, "This is a song about each one making up with each other. We do not know if we'll meet again ... I do not know". It began with some very sad sounding piano and Andy Latimer on acoustic guitar, but the mood brightened as the rest of the band joined in and the set finished to loud applause.

The inevitable encore followed. "Thank you so much for your support over the years. We could not have done it without you," declared a clearly emotional Latimer. "Excuse me sniffing," he added, "This is a song from our first album, called *Never Let Go*". This final tune gave the whole band to opportunity to shine and even allowed Colin Bass and Dennis Clement to perform short solo spots. Then after the usual bows, they disappeared from the stage with cheers ringing in their ears.

Given the success Of the tour and the fantastic response that they have received from the european audiences, the band themselves appeared to be saying "never say never", so we'll have to wait and see Whether or not this really what farewell to one of the grand old names of British Progressive Rock. I can understand that touring is very tiring and very expensive, but I, for one, hope that it is not the end.

Setlist (order varied throughout the tour)

Fantasy lady
Unevensong
Hymn to Her
Echoes
Lawrence
Drafted
Rhayader - Rhayader Town Goes to
Spirit of the Water
Ice
Arubaluba
Mother Road
Fox Hill
For Today

Never Let Go