

MAR 02 [Heaven 17 @ The Assembly, Leamington Spa, 2nd March 2010](#)
Posted by [Katja](#) on **Tuesday Mar 2, 2010** Under [123](#), [H](#)



“No-one was supposed to turn up for this one!”

Recession, unemployment, and the (potential) rise of the Tories mean that the 2010s have a fair bit in common with the 1980s so it's quite fitting that [Heaven 17](#) have climbed onto the seminal album bandwagon with the 30th anniversary of the recording of *Penthouse and Pavement*.

It's also fitting because of the political nature of the music, Songs like *...Fascist Groove Thang* and *Let's Get Back* were controversial enough in 1981 to raise the blood pressure of renowned stuffed-shirt and self-appointed moral majority Mike Read. He eventually banned the former from the Radio 1 play list.



But tonight was more than just an exercise in nostalgia for 80s synth-pop and a different political era. I would have been forgiven for thinking that the gig was a celebration of British Electric Foundation's 25th anniversary of Heaven 17's first album.

In 1981 these guys were underground heavy-weights; like The Human League, which Ian Craig Marsh had left prior to No.1 chart success, but with loads more street cred and a power to revive flagging careers like Tina Turner.

Glenn Gregory was one of the coolest guys back then and he has still got it now. But even he admitted about what was to come tonight. This is not really surprising as Heaven 17 had never played the whole album and in fact didn't play live at all properly until 1997! Plus there can't have been many more precise album stage. The mix of drum machines and synthesizers was always a sparse backdrop to the vocals and placed left the band no where to hide.



Perhaps that's why the output of BEF was so well represented. The connection between Heaven 17 and Electric Foundation is an obvious one, but maybe not one that was too obvious for the fans in the Assembly seem to know what to expect.

Essentially Heaven 17 became their own disembodied support band with three large screens pulsing Electric Foundation mix from Music For Stowaways including Groove Thang, Decline of the West, Parents By and Honeymoon In New York. This was unannounced and strangely unstructured with some long pauses, This "performance" was met with indifference for the most part and complaints from those who do not appreciate the finer points of sound and light experience.

When the band eventually appeared the songs from the Penthouse and Pavement sides of the original album were replaced by a filling of covers originally heard on the BEF album Music of Quality and Distinction Volume 1.

For me this is what made the whole night as the album itself was obviously going to be predictable, but the unexpected that stood out.

It's easy to forget how intricate some of the songs are; the convoluted bass solo in ...Fascist Groove has never been played live before and the vocals were just as taxing, or "so wordy".

Things didn't go quite to plan due to a faulty kick drum pedal and at one stage Glenn Gregory picked up a guitar with an acoustic Geisha Boys and Temple Girls imploring the audience not to tell anyone we had seen them because it would "ruin his electronic credentials".



Soul Warfare ended side one and it was back into BEF territory with Perfect Day and Wichita Lineman, by Glenn Gregory for Craig Marsh and Ware, and Ball of Confusion with Billie Godfrey taking the Tin surprise of the night was the appearance of Claudia Brucken for These Boots Are Made For Walking.

Then it was back to side two with the crowd being asked which song was first on the second side and "Love Action!" - cue much mirth on stage. Of course it was Geisha Boys and Temple Girls followed the Make a Bomb. The band made a fuss of Heaven 17 uber-fan Sumo "he even went to Canada when we his favourite The Height of The Fighting.



The encore was more familiar territory for the majority of the audience with Let Me Go and Temptation on one with Buzzcocks' Are Everything and the first song Martyn Ware ever penned Being Boiled.

The crowd might have got into the whole thing a lot earlier but they did seem to go home happy in the



Set list - in vague-ish order - the memory is not what it was!

(We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang
Penthouse and Pavement
Play to Win
Geisha Boys and Temple Girls (Acoustic)
Soul Warfare
Wichita Lineman
Perfect Day
Ball of Confusion
These Boots Were Made For Walking
I'm Your Money
Geisha Boys and Temple Girls
Let's All Make A Bomb
The Height of the Fighting
Song with No Name
We're Going To Live For A Very Long Time
Let Me Go
Temptation
Are Everything
Being Boiled

Review - Ian Gelling
Photos - Steph Colledge

Share and Enjoy:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 



One Response to "Heaven 17 @ The Assembly, Leamington Spa, 2nd March 2010"



sumo Says:

March 8th, 2010 at 12:05 pm

leamington spa was very hospitable,loved the venue for the assembly,was like the royal court in be.the concert was awesome.the guys loved it and really enjoyed themselves on the stage.highli height of the fighting' and 'Im your money' and 'Song with no name'

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Submit Comment