

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

The lamb wakes up

GENESIS WITH PETER
GABRIEL/TALK TALK/THE BLUES
BAND/JOHN MARTYN
Milton Keynes Concert Bowl

THEY'D come from all parts of the country. Some had even flown in from the States and Japan to catch this one-off, never-to-be-repeated, long-awaited and rarely-dreamt-of reunion between the current Genesis line-up and their former, volatile, charismatic mouthpiece.

And thankfully it was all in a good cause. The diabolical financial failure of Gabriel's dream - the recent WOMAD festival - required drastic measures to avert complete disaster, and this special gig was the perfect answer to raise much needed funds.

Of course it pissed down and continued to drizzle for most of the day, quickly reducing the Bowl into a slippery lake of stinking mud. The conditions were revolting.

Quite what John Martyn was doing opening the show at 2pm is anybody's guess. Certainly it threw many people - they were expecting him on much later during the day - and like me (stuck in a jam outside London) they missed his set. Apparently he was very good, and I'm sorry I missed 'yer John.

Thankfully, due to a jam outside the Bowl, I didn't witness the dreaded Blues Band, but I'm assured they went down well, easily gaining a deserved encore.

I did manage to catch Talk Talk, but why they were here at all, let alone so far up the bill, must remain a mystery. Predictably, in the face of a plastic bottle assault, violent verbal abuse and mass apathy, they floundered. A set best forgotten.

The weather got worse, dampening everybody's enthusiasm. Would this reunion be worth the mud, the stink, the naff lager and the drunken wallies up front?

An emphatic yes! Two hours after Talk Talk shut up, Genesis drifted onto a blue lit stage. The lights broadened and six pallbearers brought on a coffin which opened up to reveal Gabriel in *make-up*. It was his old Rael disguise, and it became obvious that Gabriel was prepared not just to sing old Genesis numbers, but to *perform* them with his old costumes (brown cloak and mask/the sunflower, etc) brought out of the mothballs.

Rael's anthem - "Back In New York City" opened up the historic set, the sound initially dodgy and variable, with Gabriel valiantly coping with a naff mike. Things improved as Banks, Collins, Gabriel, Rutherford, Stuermer and Thompson strolled leisurely down memory lane - "Selling England" segued into "Carpet Crawlers", blossoming out into a triumphant "Firth Of Fifth", and then motored on, gaining in strength through "The Musical Box" and "Solsbury Hill" until they reached the newest number of the set - "Turn It On Again".

Here Collins and Gabriel switched roles - Phil rushed up front for the main vocal, while Peter took on Collins' kit. And as they switched they embraced - a touching moment in this night of heavy, burning, nostalgia.

This was no ordinary gig. As they continued through "The Lamb Lies Down" sequence and a much requested and extremely well played "Supper's Ready", the pure joy radiating from the big six billowed out across the Bowl, quickly capturing the hearts of the 60,000 soaked and muddy disciples.

And then came the *real* surprise. On walked Steve Hackett! Cue crowd going bonkers! Cue "I Know What I Like"! Cue naff sound, but who gives a damn, now that the legendary Genesis line-up are at last all on the same stage again?

Of course "The Knife" had to be the closer, the final punch to this amazing benefit. In fact the song was a bit blunt - a mess all round - but nobody cared, least of all me, as the seven-piece carved their way into the pages of pop history.

A reunion that is unlikely to ever happen again. The rock event of the year. - PAUL STRANGE.



Pete Gabriel's Uncle Bert joins Genesis in Outer Mongolian raindance