

CSS @ Concorde 2

Contributed by Elz
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It's a sign of a good show: you've got bruising on the back of your elbows, your ears are still ringing over twenty-four hours later and you don't mind either of them. But I'll start at the beginning.

I arrived ten minutes before doors were due to open to find a very small queue for a sold-out show. My resident gig partner had gone for a wander, and when she got back we decided to skip forward to stand in the giant gap some emo-looking girls had left. Foolish emo-looking girls. Doors were a good half-hour late, and by that time a huge number of people had joined the line. The first ever bag check I've had at Concorde 2 resulted in security taking my water away from me (grr) and we went inside to secure ourselves a good spot against the barrier.

There was a forty-five minute wait for the first support act, Brooklyn band Ratatat, who were a lot better than I'd expected. I won't lie; it helped that their guitarist was Jesus or a close relative of his. They played a half-hour set, purely instrumental, which I felt worked incredibly well. By the end of it, I couldn't tell what was pre-recorded and what the three men on stage were playing live. The guitar parts especially struck me as Mike Oldfield influenced, though I don't know if that was true or not. Either way, I would love to see them again as an opener or on their own tour. My only gripe would be the smoke machine insanity during the last song. I didn't have a drink and it dried out my throat something dreadful.

Ratatat were definitely, definitely better than the second support, Crystal Castles. The female member tried to excuse a synth malfunction with the fact that they hadn't been able to soundcheck. That didn't excuse her "singing" (see: kicking an extended family of chipmunks to death). The instrumental parts were great, but her voice ruined the whole thing. I kept finding my face screwed up into the bastard child of a frown and a sneer and having to rearrange it hastily in case she looked at me. It was a mercifully short set.

However, I'd stand through Crystal Castles again to see CSS. We didn't have to wait long before the band began to filter onstage, Lovefoxxx last of all and backwards. She was wearing, as I'm sure you want to know, a Ratatat t-shirt over a purple spandex catsuit. She reached behind her for the microphone and yelled into it, "Are you ready for this jelly?" And we most certainly were.

They opened with "CSS Suxxx", which everyone joined in with enthusiastically, before segueing directly into "Alala". At some point during the first few songs, Lovefoxxx took her first crowd-surfing excursion over on the other side of the stage. Security seemed to go into a panic at that and pulled her back onto the stage shortly. She almost lost her Ratatat t-shirt in the crowd, but it remained on long enough for her to throw it off at a later point in the set.

There were more photographers at CSS than I've ever seen at any other Concorde show, and with good reason. Lovefoxxx never stopped moving, and there was enough energy between the other band members to keep everything interesting. Luiza in particular was rocking the right hand side of the stage to balance out Ira's calmer demeanour. They rolled through a set of the songs you'd expect with practised (yet ramshackle) ease, with the irrepressible Lovefoxxx providing the highlights; performing lewd acts with her mic stand, balancing a shoe throw onstage on her head before dropping it on a photographer, molesting a security man when he tried to pull her back onstage after another visit to the pit, wearing a flexible glowstick as an impromptu retainer - the list goes on.

The main set ended with "Let's Make Love and Listen To Death From Above" (also "Let's Get Drunk and Listen To James Blunt", "Let's Get Undressed and Listen To CSS"), which was the cue for Lovefoxxx to come to our side of the stage and launch herself at us. Unfortunately, she's slightly heavier than she looks and I almost dropped her before some people behind us got a grip on her. Still, I was closer then to a vagina involuntarily than I have been since I was born. Ace. There was a brief break and then they came back on for a two-song encore. Lovefoxxx was the last to leave the stage after thanking us all profusely and blowing glittery streamer kisses at us.

Once people had started clearing out, the lights had come up and I'd managed to grab a setlist (Ira's, I believe), Gig Partner and I agreed that this was easily a strong contender for gig of the year, even though this was the first gig of the year for me. I picked up a t-shirt at the merch stand on the way out. After all, this wasn't a gig I want to forget about anytime soon.