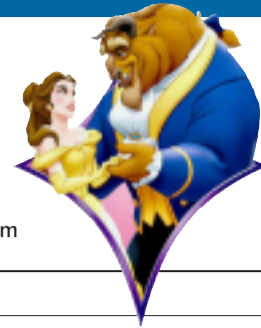


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Triumphant homecoming as Cult keep the spirit alive

The Cult
Manchester Apollo.....

It has been a long time but there seems to be little change in The Cult's appeal or formula.

Take a baying rock frontman and a Mancunian guitarist well-versed in the history of hard rock and you still have a winning, if slightly clichéd, formula.

For Wythenshawe boy Billy Duffy this was a triumphant homecoming. His band may have been gone for over a decade and yet this was a packed show in his home city.

From opener L'il Devil, it was clear Duffy and co were here to

re-tread old ground. And that was exactly what the audience wanted.

While frontman Ian Astbury has never been afraid of wearing his heart and his influences on his sleeve, last night he seemed a rather more restrained figure.

His instantly recognisable rock yelp was still much in evidence, so classics such as Rain, Edie and The Witch held plenty of significance for the crowd, many of whom were probably here to see the same outfit a good 20 years ago.

Top marks must be given to Duffy, who with his lank, bleached blonde hair still looks like the man deposed England

captain David Beckham was trying so hard to emulate a few years ago.

Astbury, with his bouncy, curly barnet, cut a slightly less iconic figure.

But as the songs of The Cult's prime rang out to an appreciative audience, no one was complaining.

Spiritwalker was dedicated to fellow Manc Johnny Marr, showing that despite the years of cosmopolitan living, The Cult have hopefully not lost their northern roots.

This was unashamedly loud, proud and damn good fun. It was good to have Duffy back.

Neal Snowdon

**GUITAR HEROES** Johnny Marr and Billy Duffy. The Cult's track Spiritwalker was dedicated to Marr

Rib-tickling Bronte spoof

Withering Looks

The Lowry.....

NOTED for their unique brand of silliness, Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding, the comic duo who created Lipservice, are celebrating 21 years in showbusiness.

In honour of the 150th anniversary of the death of Charlotte Bronte, they have dusted off their crinolines to reprise their popular Bronte spoof on the works of the legendary sisters.

Fourteen years on, this pastiche, with a few updates, is still as funny now because both women play several roles with merely an apron or moustache to indicate the change in character.

A cardboard cut-out set allows a peep inside the icy cold parsonage, where we are introduced only to Charlotte and Emily as, we're informed, due to lack of lottery funding, there's no one to play Ann.

Directed with pace by Noreen Kershaw (Corrie, Emmerdale and Shameless) the inventiveness of the performers and their great comic timing had the audience guffawing with laughter, prompting a series of curtain calls.

The evening ended with an entertaining re-creation of the 1939 Hollywood movie of Wuthering Heights which starred Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon.

After this week, Lipservice take this show to the real Bronte Parsonage.

Goodness only knows what they will make of it!

Natalie Anglesey

Magnum Opus by the Elder statesman

Halle Orchestra

Bridgewater Hall.....

IT seemed Mark Elder hadn't quite lost the Last Night Of The Proms spirit when he conducted the first of the Halle's Opus One concert series.

We got a few extras from the musicians - and a bad joke or

two from the conductor, as well as some very good music.

That began with Berlioz' Le Corsair overture - flashy and thrilling - and continued with Stephen Hough's cool, controlled account of Mozart's piano concerto no. 21. The orchestra was seated with the wind players stage right - a spatial-aural ex-

periment which highlighted the delicious harmonic suspensions in the slow movement, as well as the cushion of warm sound they provide elsewhere.

The solo was limpidly beautiful, especially Hough's subtle hesitations in the first movement's feminine melody, and the finale pointed and bustling. The con-

cert was to end with act two of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, but the Halle added three encores - one (Stravinsky's Circus Polka) before the swans had even swum.

The ballet scenes allowed the conductor to emphasise details and take some sections at speeds that would make the lifts and balances night-impossible in per-

formance. All good fun, though, and splendid sounds.

I wished Elder could have tried a little terpsichorean demonstration himself.

He got near to it, though, in his Stan Kenton impersonation for the brass's second party piece at the end.

Robert Beale

**PHENOMENON** Guitarist Joe Bonamassa

Guitar prodigy Joe comes of age

PAUL TAYLOR

IN the 16 years since the tragic death of Stevie Ray Vaughan, no-one has quite filled his shoes as charismatic bluesman-cum-axe hero.

Eric Clapton can still thrill on a good night. Gary Moore has phenomenal chops. Various young pretenders to Stevie's throne, such as Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Jonny Lang, have been touted, but failed to set the world alight, while a thousand tribute acts slavishly copy the late Texan's craft nightly at a pub-rock venue near you.

Now comes Joe Bonamassa, a freakishly-fast fretburner who plays the blues with almost the same awe-inspiring muscularity

as SRV, but does a lot more besides. New Yorker Joe, now 29, first heard SRV when he was four, and started playing on a short-scale guitar. By seven, he had his hands on a full-sized model and within 12 months, blues legend BB King was uttering: "This kid's potential is unbelievable. He's one of a kind."

At 12, young Joe was sharing a stage with BB, before joining Bloodline - a band made up of children of the famous, including Waylon Krieger (son of Doors guitarist Robby), Erin Davis (son of jazzier Miles) and Berry Oakey Jnr (son of the Allman Brothers bassist). His first solo disc, A New Day Yesterday, featured such luminaries as Gregg Allman, Rick Derringer and Leslie

West, and was produced by Tom Dowd, who had, in his time, recorded with Aretha Franklin, Eric Clapton, Ray Charles and Ornette Coleman.

Bonamassa got involved in a "Blues In The Schools" project, organised by the Blues Foundation to keep alive America's musical legacy, and the guitar fraternity began to cotton on to the fact that here was a young player who had listened to the likes of Peter Green, Jeff Beck and Clapton, as well as SRV, and could replicate their licks...and then some.

The jaw-dropping Bonamassa moment for most British fans came when Joe was featured on a DVD produced by Guitarist magazine earlier this year, reeling off

his guitar influences and giving a blistering demonstration of each while talking nonchalantly to camera.

His latest disc, You And Me, shows him capable of everything from swampy acoustic slide guitar to heads-down boogie and bluesy balladeering.

Says Joe: "This is the CD I've had in my head for a few years now. Don't get me wrong, the blues is what I am and where I'm from, but every once in a while, as an artist, you have to mix it up. Try something new. Push yourself. That's what I'm doing with You and Me."

.....
» **Joe Bonamassa plays at the Academy, Manchester, tonight, tickets £12**

► Sweet music for Robbie and Shakira?

If **ROBBIE** Williams is feeling the need to revive his songwriting partnership with Guy Chambers, the offer's on the table.

However, there is one condition - that he releases a duet with Latina beauty Shakira.

Guy reckons his Shakira plan could rocket Robbie to the top of the charts both here and in America.

"He should always have done that," an excited Guy explains.

"It would be the perfect match and I would like to write the tune for it. It would be a worldwide hit and would break Robbie in America."