

FM - Review of Firefest 2007 by Darren Brushneen for Hardrockhouse – 08 Nov 2007



If the previous two bands had been emotional goodbyes then, for FM, it was an equally emotional return to the scene after over a decade away. For headline bands at festivals such as these it is sometimes difficult to follow what has gone before, just ask Winger about last year's show. With that in mind there must have been a whole lot of nerves in the FM camp as they prepared to hit the stage, would they struggle to live up to the standards set by Tyketto, Harem Scarem and the rest.



Two TV screens on each side of the stage displayed the Union Jack along with the theme to Dad's Army blasting out of the PA as an intro. A humorous touch that set the mood for the rest of the night as far as FM were concerned as the screens dipped into a montage of old footage of the band in their heyday, along with various images to fit in with the songs. Now I don't know how many hours they slogged out rehearsing for the show but, whatever they did, it paid off as, right from the start with "Breathe Fire" and "Face to Face", they appeared tight and didn't put a foot wrong throughout their allotted time. Vocally Steve Overland was superb, as if he'd never been away, and the quintet came across as a band that were simply enjoying being back together and in the live environment once more. Continuing with "That Girl", "Run No More", "All or Nothing" and "Only The Strong Survive"; it is worth a mention that, once again, the crowd were in good voice as they had been for the whole day yet, far from being worn by previous exertions, FM tempted the tired voices to greater things.



One thing FM may regret though is playing "Bad Luck" because, although everything ran smoothly until "Other Side Of Midnight", towards the end of the song a power cut on stage brought proceedings to a temporary standstill, leading to a massive, massed chant for FM while the situation was fixed. All was put right relatively quickly, apart from main vocals, which thus gave guitarist Andy Barnett time for a small solo spot to entertain the crowd while they waited; once things were finally fixed though FM duly finished all of, what must have been the remaining 20 seconds of the song before closing out their main set with "Blood And Gasoline". An encore was, of course, obligatory and they returned to serve up "Frozen Heart", the first part of which was solely sung by the crowd as the band just stood back and took in the sea of raised arms and voices. Of course all good things must come to an end and thus Firefest IV was brought to a close with a rousing "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" as the band took their leave to an immense response from everyone present. I swear there were tears in the eyes of the band as they left the stage.



Pete Jupp especially looked truly overwhelmed by the response and the fact that their return to the live stage for Firefest had been such a great success. Whether anything had been decided prior to the show or not Jupp's parting comment, harking back to a tradition from the band's history was "Shall we do this again?". So I guess we have more to look forward to from the reunited, and clearly re-invigorated FM in 2008.



For anyone who has been to the previous three instalments of Firefest then there can be little doubt that ,with IV, the organizers topped anything that had went before. Over the course of two days twelve bands gave blood, sweat, tears and no little talent to entertain, and impress the sold out venues. And deservedly sold out too. The decision to move Day One from the Rig to the University was a masterstroke as this allowed the bands a far greater stage to play on and the audience more room to both watch, mingle and socialize. And as for the main day, well I don't think I've ever seen Rock City as packed as it was on this occasion. Sure the venue still has it's downsides. Nowhere really to go and chill out over the course of the twelve hours or so of the show, truly disgusting toilet facilities, massive queues at the bar and little in the way of food but, quibbles like these aside, for a bill of this strength and quality it's easy to put up with minor hardships for one day. The big question is how do the Firefest crew top this for 2008?