

Stormy Weather and John Mayer: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

What is it with Albuquerque weather and John Mayer? When Tina and I saw him in 2013 at the same venue (Isleta Amphitheatre, in Albuquerque), it got so unexpectedly cold that we had to leave about 2/3 of the way through—a practice I really hate, especially during a great concert. This time, Tina had commitments in Houston, so I returned alone to NM and took my niece (Ebony Olivas—see #0257)), and we got rained on starting about 3/4 of the way through with a light sprinkle, one that ratcheted up by the end of the show. Getting rained on in Houston is one thing, but getting rained on in drought-stricken NM is quite another. (Annual precipitation in Albuquerque is less than 10”, both snow and rain. Late summer is the “monsoon” season, but still—ANNUAL precipitation in the State is less than a long and humid weekend in Houston.) The weather pattern reminded me of one time at Sandia Casino Amphitheatre, also in Albuquerque, when we saw James Brown in a riveting performance in the driving rain, where the horizontal torrents soaked everyone but us, as we were, however improbably, in the very front row and protected, sort of, by the stage proscenium and some garbage bags they had handy.

Weather notwithstanding, it was a great show. As Posse readers know, in the last 6 weeks, we saw U2, Carlos Santana, and Mayer, including three of the best and most distinctive lead guitarists in the world. The opening act was The Night Game (#0251), a power and finesse group that Mayer discovered on Spotify, a good hunting ground for major performers who might be scouting out opening acts that will mesh and appeal to their core listeners. They began late after an announced 7:00 start, and Mayer didn't arrive on stage until about 8:40. He is worth the wait, but still.

He divided the performance into what he called different chapters: **Chapter 1: Full Band**—Helpless, Belief, Clarity, Moving On and Getting Over, and Why Georgia; **Chapter 2: Trio**—Crossroads (cover of the Robert Johnson song, covered famously by Eric Clapton in his Cream period, Jimi Hendrix's Wait Until Tomorrow, and Vultures); **Chapter 3: Solo Acoustic**—Daughters, Emoji, and Tom Petty's Free Fallin', The entire band re-grouped for **Chapter 4: Full Band Reprise**—Queen of California; Who Says; Slow Dancing in a Burning Room, In the Blood; and Dear Marie, and then Stop This Train, Edge of Desire, and Gravity as encores.

The John Mayer Trio (with bassist Pino Palladino and drummer Steve Jordan) is a tight trio imbedded within the larger band, and they have been the core of Mayer's performances for over a dozen years, since they opened for the Stones in 2005. He hit all the right notes, mixing his old classic work and some fresh work. His last album was more countrified than I like, but *Continuum* is a wonderful album with not a bad song on it. I was surprised to see the covers, but their range looped in Hendrix, Clapton, Tom Petty, and Robert Johnson. In other words, the DNA strands of all the great guitarists were in the house, omitting only Pete Townshend, whose work was blaring in advance, along with the crashing chords of Keith Richards. The place was filled, although not as filled as it was with Santana, who appeals to vintage and young crowds. It certainly showed in our ability to zip out with fewer cars at the end, in the rain.

The two large Isleta screens were not hooked up, likely because his own scrim was filled with bright and slashing images. Ebony's and my seats were excellent, in the middle, and raised, about 150 feet back. I like Mayer's great work and virtuosity, but I also like his various partnerships and hookups, such as his extensive work with the remaining Grateful Dead members, many charity concerts, and a wide range of collaborators. He has not kept his wicked talent under a bushel basket, for which I am grateful.

Next show while hiding in plain sight in Santa Fe to finish two book projects: Regina Spector at Albuquerque's Popejoy Hall, a medium-sized orchestral venue on the campus of UNM, in October. I will keep observing until then, and will be entering the studio soon to record more radio shows. So much legal material, so little time each week.

Enjoy the shrinking summer.

