

Damien Rice, Another Master Class, Really Solo: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

Several years ago, I saw Damien Rice for the second time, pronounced it a “Master Class,” and among my favorite concert performances, ever, ever. I noted that he had some backup performers for a few of his songs, but last week, Tina and I saw him solo, really solo, with no one else on the stage at any point, once the roadies set it up. We had front row seats, at \$35 each, and were maybe 12 feet away, perhaps 15. But no matter, he played at the NM School for the Deaf, in Santa Fe, at the cozy James A. Little Theatre, which seats maybe 350 fans, with no bad seats or sightlines, and not a single obstruction. (The worst we ever encountered was at a West End theater in London, where we saw the original cast of *Phantom of the Opera*, featuring Sarah Brightman, where we got last-minute tickets behind two pillars. It was still well worth it.) I am getting on their mailing list for future concerts, both because groups do not come through Santa Fe often, and more to the point, we will retire fulltime to Santa Fe next July, sure to cramp our Houston concert-going. It turns out he had played the Paramount in town 15 years ago, before he was big, and had an enthusiastic reception, so he sandwiched little Santa Fe onto the end of the US-portion of his current tour, which ends in Australia soon. The truth is, he mostly plays in Europe, so being able to see him in my hometown in such a great venue was even more of a spectacular gift than it would have been

in Houston, where his tour did not take him this time around, although he played Austin.

No warm up, just him walking onstage at about 15 minutes after the posted start time, saying hello, and playing *The Blower's Daughter*, the song I first heard from his repertoire that I immediately fell in love with. I explained the details in that first awakening to his music, and include it here. All earlier Posse Postings are downloadable at: www.lawofrockandroll.com .

http://lawofrockandroll.com/cgi-bin/rockandroll/jump.cgi?ID=133;v=PDF;fname=/Damien%20Rice%27s%20Roundelay%20and%20RIP,%20Rick%20Rosas_%20Michael%27s%20Rock%20and%20Roll%20Posse.pdf

He played through most of his great hits, with only a few I had not heard, and he said he is going back into the studio to cut another album. He is all over YouTube, often in full-length concerts, including some older ones with Lisa Hannigan as his wonderful back up. (I hope someday to catch a concert of hers, but she mostly performs all over Europe, and only rarely in the United States:

<https://lisahannigan.ie/> .)

He still talks too much, but at least this time he didn't call-and-play with the audience, although his last 4 or 5 songs were all requested out loud by audience members, who sang along with him, enraptured, as I was. I said earlier that he reminds me of a young Cat Stevens/Yusuf Islam, and he still does, but I had a flash that he was more like Harry Chapin than any other performer, and I loved Harry, and even met him through a Georgetown Law professor who involved him in various hunger projects. Professor John Kramer brought him to Georgetown one time after an evening Legislation class, and I got to tag along to a local bar, where he took it over. I saw him several times later, in Columbus and elsewhere, including a small Ohio college (Kenyon, according to my notes), where he interacted with the audience, but stopped the nonsense, saying after several dozen entreaties: "You really don't think I am just winging it here, do you?" and he showed us the setlist on a 3x5 card that he had taped to the crook of his guitar. The interconnectedness of all these hundreds of performances still always interests and delights me.

1. The Blower's Daughter
2. Delicate
3. Trusty and True

4. Woman Like a Man
5. Older Chests
6. My Favourite Faded Fantasy
7. Behind Those Eyes
8. Amie
9. The Greatest Bastard
10. I Don't Want to Change You
11. Cross-Eyed Bear
12. The Professor & la fille danse
13. I Remember

Encore:

14. Cannonball
15. 9 Crimes
16. Volcano

It was a most satisfying evening, welcoming us back to Santa Fe, where we will stay until early January. He was letter perfect, which is saying a lot considering the esteem in which I hold him, and it was, well, virtuoso. I could not help but think of all the machinery it takes to get this troubadour from one gig to the next, and then he gets up in front of another audience and makes magic. It must also be lonely and

tiring and what happens when he doesn't feel well, or his voice hoarsens? I couldn't help but think of all these moving parts as I saw his roadies, hangers-on, and assistants. This whole process reminded me of the Jackson Browne song, *Stay*, a riff on the old Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs song about being on the road, performing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICMt-q7dtAg> . This is my favorite version, but there is even a website devoted to various *Stay* covers: <https://secondhandsongs.com/work/9511/versions> .

Coming up in the new year, we have tickets to The Zombies (who should be in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by then), Van (twice, in Las Vegas), and tidying up after 37 years in Houston. After this year's Fireside Chat with Justice Sotomayor, I have three such events: Professor Anita Hill, former AG Alberto Gonzales, and Simon Tam, the lead singer of The Slants, whose recent trademark action to own the band name was granted unanimously by SCOTUS. All this, and a farewell party in April, to say goodbye to my students, fiends, and colleagues and to try and get folks to donate to the proposed new UHLC building that is on the books, which will have the Michael A. Olivas and Augustina H. Reyes Reading Room. Oh yes, and I will see many of you at AALS, in New Orleans.

Last night, I turned in my grades, and last week, the manuscript for my forthcoming NYU Press book project, *Perchance to DREAM: A Legal and Political History of The DREAM Act and DACA*—of course, soon to be a major motion picture, starring Jimmy Smits as me, given the eerie resemblance. On account of all this, I am feeling pretty virtuous right now. I hope all of you are feeling the same way.

Happy holidays to all of you.

Michael

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