

Van Again and Again in Vegas: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

Happy campers Michael O and Tina R at Van Morrison concert, Caesar's Palace, LV, January 25-26, first time we have seen the same performer twice in 2 days. Might as well start this tradition with Van, the best of them all. A on Friday, A+ on Saturday (incl 2 Astral Weeks songs)--over the moon(dance)



Two weekends ago, Tina and I spent a long weekend in Las Vegas with Phillip, my brother who has retired there, and who seems to have recovered from his various physical issues. He lives alone in a very nice duplex outside the city, and is gearing up for more foreign travel: he is just back from Colombia and has bought tickets for Israel. (Living in and doing missionary work in Texas is all the foreign travel I get these days.) We also had lunch with Fr Sam Falbo, a long time-ago science teacher at the IHM Seminary and St Pius X High School. He is in his mid-80s, and is very engaging and happy there in his 3rd of 4th retirement, having founded a new parish in LV. He was not only the greatest teacher I had (of many, over the years), but he was always a good friend and mentor to me. We started a SPX Scholarship named for him, about a dozen years ago.

I begin with a picture taken by Phillip, where I am being very versatile with my cane; in another picture, it morphed into a hot jazz saxophone. On Friday night, longtime friends Manuel Gomez (retired VP, UC-Irvine) and Genet Chavez Gomez (from NM) joined me, and on Saturday, Phillip and Tina came.

Of the two nights, I would give Friday an A, and Saturday earned extra points for playing two tracks from Astral Weeks (*Beside You* and *Ballerina*), giving it an A+. The first night, they

were tight and synchronized, and were even more so the second night. The band included Jay Berliner: guitar; Mez Clough: drums, backing vocals; David Hayes: bass; Dave Keary: guitar, pedal steel; Teena Lyle: backing vocals, piano, vibes, recorder, percussion; Dana Masters: lead & backing vocals, percussssion; Paul Moran: keyboards, trumpet; and Van played acoustic and electric guitar, sax, and the mouth harp, where he remains extraordinarily adept, for which he is not given much credit. Speaking of giving credit, Van did not introduce the band members, which he usually mumbles at different points of play. I had not heard Dana Masters from Atlanta sing, and she was truly amazing, and I can see how she scats and growls a lot like Van does—the two of them played off each other’s voices, particularly on Saturday night. (Hat tip to Simon Gee) The setlists below reveal the group’s deep repertoire, most of them Van songs.

A note about the venue: the Coliseum at Caesar’s Palace. I had the same seats both nights, and the sightlines and acoustics were just fabulous. On Saturday night, a fight broke out during the final songs—still didn’t ruin the *Astral Weeks* vibe—when two women started whaling on each other. I heard the scuffle, about 20 feet away, but tried to focus on the end of the concert, which

I knew was at hand. The ushers quelled the scuffle, and we left, very happy campers.

I love Tina, my brother and my friends, and Van and his great musicians. I cannot imagine a better two evenings of play than I had. I am, as always, a lucky boy. And the TSA issues ended over that weekend, and we had smooth sailing at the airports.

Friday Setlist:

- How Far From God
- Symphony Sid
- Baby Please Don't Go/ Cry, Cry, Cry/Mojo Working
- Days Like This
- Have I Told You Lately
- Sometimes We Cry
- Wild Nights
- Ain't Gonna Moan No More
- Magic Time
- Precious Time
- In the Midnight

- Moondance/So What/My Funny Valentine
- Broken Record
- I Believe To My Soul
- Did Ye Get Healed?
- Think Twice Before You Go
- Crazy Love
- All In The Game/You Know What They're Writing About ("No Plan B/No Safety Net")/Burning Ground
- The Party's Over
- Brown Eyed Girl
- Gloria

Saturday Setlist:

- Let's Get Lost
- Symphony Sid
- Baby Please Don't Go/Cry, Cry, Cry/ Mojo Working
- Days Like This
- Have I Told You Lately

- Sometimes We Cry
- Moondance/So What/My Funny Valentine
- Talk is Cheap
- St. James Infirmary
- I Believe To My Soul
- Broken Record
- Why Must I Always Explain
- Vanlose Stairway
- Whenever God Shines His Light
- Cleaning Windows
- In The Afternoon/Ancient Highway
- Beside You
- Ballerina
- Gloria

Next up: The Zombies in Houston.

Michael
2/8/2019