

Of a Concert – and a Number of Comfort Breaks

by JaneW photos by Aleks Potter

I felt a little sad setting off from Bradford on Sunday morning. A little sad and a bit anxious. KK, who had been so excited at the thought of seeing Lee and Stephen's new show at the wonderfully intimate Pheasantry, was unable to come. It's always a sad when someone can't make a show but this time I had an extra worry - getting back to my hotel after the show, late at night and alone. (Those who know me realise my sense of direction is remarkable. Remarkably crap that is.)

J, bless her, found a travelling companion for me, a lady I didn't know but I assumed a good egg coz, hey! She's a Lee fan! This was going to be an adventure.

Glorious sunshine bathed London and had it not been for an Autumnal nip in the air I could have believed it still summer. Though come to think of it the masses of fallen leaves were a giveaway too.

At 2pm, after a shower and copious amounts of tea I set off for Chelsea figuring I would find some lunch on the way. I found sustenance in the form of a bag of Monster Munch (yes I know – stop nagging me about the joys of a banana or whatever) and strode off down Kings Road pausing only for the now traditional loo stop at McDonald's. For once I felt utterly confident having visited the venue twice before. I knew I just had a straight road to follow - what could go wrong?

Well walking right bloomin' passed it for a start!

I arrived at the Pheasantry just after 3pm.

The waitress seemed a little perplexed that I wouldn't sit down at a table. I explained that I was looking for friends (for 'looking for friends' read 'checking if a queue had started') but she eventually allowed me through

to the stairs. I could hear at once chatter in the stairwell. Yep. The queue had started! When Lee fans queue we QUEUE!

I got chatting to the charming lady standing next to me (If you are reading this Hi G! Nice to meet you!) and soon enough J arrived, followed about 30 mins later by A.

Queuing at the Pheasantry requires some dedication. The stairwell is hot, cramped and uncomfortable (forgive the tautology – coz yeah, hot and cramped couldn't be described as comfy) yet we gabbed away to each other and the time flew – well jogged by at a moderate pace.

I knew we were too far back in line to get the best seats, but the waiter suggested a table to the right of the stage just one row back as it were. J, A, E and I were able to sit on it together with one empty seat where KK should have been. Sniff!

Now to the concert...

But first let me tell you about my trip to the toilet. No honest this is relevant because as I headed for the loo, Lee and Stephen walked into the stairwell. Lee seemed to be warming up. At least he was singing snatches of song in the unconscious manner of someone in the shower. R (who was coming out of the loo as I was heading in) said something very articulate and complimentary while I managed to mumble 'Ooo nice.'

Lee was quite oblivious but Stephen gave me a big grin and a nod.

A few minutes later with me back in my seat, Stephen and Lee made their entrance - which involved them walking right passed our table.

They both appeared happy and relaxed. Both looked mighty fine in patterned long sleeved shirts and suit trousers. I suspect they'd intended to

wear full suits but that they'd left off their jackets due to the heat in the room.

Lee and Stephen were supported by Steve, a pianist, and Don, a double-bass player. I love double bass. I think it gives a pleasing depth to a song.

I think we all accept that these Both Sides Now Pheasantry concerts are pilots. They were experimenting with their formula in front of this select, supportive audience. Stephen spoke to us as though we had all been there the previous night. I'm sure he was 90% right. When Lee asked if anyone had seen the SEE concert Stephen laughed and said 'Of course they have!'



Lee started by explaining why the two of them had decided to form a double act. He talked about meeting Stephen during West End Men with Ramin Karimloo and how Stephen and Lee decided to go it alone.

Not surprisingly they opened with their familiar duet, “Luck be a Lady”, a good choice it being such an upbeat number and one they always have such fun with.

Stephen then sang “True Colours”. Stephen often gets too jazzy for my taste but I'm pleased to say he more or less left off the jazz for the evening so personally I enjoyed his performances even more than usual.

Next Lee took his turn at the mike. He explained that he's been single for a couple of years but now feels ready to start dating again. Then he launched into song – “With or Without You”. A surprising choice I thought. It suited him perfectly though allowing him to express his emotions with soft melodic verses soaring into the powerful refrain.



Then followed a number everyone calls “The Adele Song” probably because it has such an unmemorable title. The song is lovely though and Lee and Stephen sang it beautifully. Steve the Pianist has worked with Adele and was teased all night about it. He gave as good as he got! He's a funny personable guy and joined in the banter - leading Lee to declare 'I think we've just become a trio.' to which Steve the Pianist replied 'At last!'.

OK from now on I'm a bit blurry about the order so I'll just talk about the songs as I remember them.

I have to confess that as enjoyable as the concert was it wasn't quite perfect. Some of the duets still need a little work. This is hardly surprising as the pair of them have had very little rehearsal time thanks to Lee's busy schedule. They've been rehearsing over Skype, according to Stephen. It's a helluva achievement to have created so many great duets this way. And from what I was told it seems they are improving with each performance.

I loved their brave duet version of “Bring Him Home”. Lee's rich tenor combined with Stephen's remarkable falsetto stunned me. If they keep it in I believe it'll be a highlight of their show.

When you go to see Lee in concert you don't just get to hear a singer with a beautiful voice; you get a comedian. When Lee and Stephen are together the comedy escalates.

Especially when Stephen is being evil.

So I come to the funniest part of the evening - Stephen serenading Lee with a love song.

Because of the position of our seats I couldn't see much of Lee during Stephen's solos so I missed seeing some of his facial expressions. But the howls of laughter from the left of me said it all. Those I did see had me rocking backwards and forwards as I guffawed! The looks of surprise, puzzlement and confusion passing over Lee's face becoming more exaggerated as Stephen became more passionate had me in hysterics.

More laughs came with another of Stephen's solos which had a lyric about a 'white moon'. He sent Lee onto the balcony to play the moon, which of course he did by wiggling his decidedly pert bum at the audience.

Stephen is an extremely generous performer repeatedly allowing (even insisting) his friend to upstage him.

I can't remember what ended the first half but as the lads left the stage I realised I was sitting right in the way of their exit route. I moved onto the seat which should have been KK's, out of their way. Lee turned to me with a huge sunny smile that made my little lippy heart go thump thump thump.

On the way out to the loo at interval (yes I know I go a lot) I found myself following Stephen who, like the gentleman he is, held the door open for me.

What other songs did we have?...

After the interval Lee sang “Better”. (Err as in the song, not as in improvement. Because he didn’t need to improve - oh you know what I mean!) I’ve not heard him sing that since the Love Tour. It was like hearing from an old friend.

Stephen gave us “A Case of You” which has been a favorite of mine since the first time I heard him sing it.

And they sang the “Happy Days Are Here Again” and “Get Happy” mash up that Lee normally does with Amanda. Now I really like the version he does with Amanda but the version he does with Stephen is superb. The two strong male voices balance each other beautifully and there is no sense of one performer taking the lead over the other.

Stephen had another solo, which I wish they had dueted on: “Kissed by a Rose”. He started it with a Bollywood spin which I’m not convinced worked. It might grow on me.

Another song I really enjoyed was Lee’s somewhat coy version of Take That’s “Want You Back for Good”. This was a whole heap of fun as Lee encouraged the audience to sing the backing vocals.

Stephen also did an audience participation song. I sang along with gusto but can I remember what it was? Can I heck!

The best song of the evening? Lee’s “Feeling Good” which is now magnificently strong and powerful. He didn’t hold back for the small venue but filled the top with his majestic voice. Sigh!

The concert ended with whoops and cheers and cries of more!

As the concert finished I again moved to let them off stage and this time Lee accompanied his beaming smile with a 'Thank you'. LOVE THAT GUY!!!

I went to the loo (OK OK - I know this has been the story of my bladder movements. Shut up! I have a point!) and bumped into Steve the Pianist who I thanked and complimented on his performance. He seemed very pleased.

I headed out into the mercifully cool air with E and J, my mind buzzing with delight. We said our farewells to A. Then E too had to go.

Now I had a little mission, involving a get well card for KK. I didn't expect I'd fulfill it but I managed to speak to first Stephen then Lee and both of them were kind enough not only to sign the card but to write lovely little messages to her. Aren't those guys lovely!

J introduced me to JQ my escort back to KX. If you are reading this JQ – it was lovely to meet you and your friends. We had a really pleasant journey back chattering all the way.

And so that's it.

Another concert – another wonderful evening. Thank you to everyone who made it so special!