

Do feed the animals

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Whether you're a fan or not, Zebra & Giraffe never disappoint, as everyone who attended their Kirstenbosch open-air concert found out.



The Mother City, as if in anticipation of the multitudes that flocked to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens to catch Zebra and Giraffe, was on her best behaviour with perfect weather. With the buzz surrounding their latest album creating an electric atmosphere and the soothing zephyr wafting down from the surrounding mountains, fans couldn't have asked for better conditions.

The crowd, in itself, was surprising. Sure there were plenty of first-year students (and even younger fans) milling around the Kirstenbosch lawns, as expected, but there were quite a few grey hairs peppered around the cosmopolitan audience too.

Slick, edgy electro rock

After a brief and rather cheesy intro by Good Hope FM jock Guy McDonald, the band finally entered the stage in all their uber coolness. They knew their fans were there for their trademark slick, edgy electro rock, and they weren't about to disappoint.

The din of conversation and clinking glasses subsided in anticipation and the first riffs blasted out into the expectant crowd from the strategically placed speakers. There were many shrieks, cheers and whoops as the 2009 SAMA-winning (Best Rock Album: English) band bathed the crowd with their opening track, taken from their "Collected Memories" album. As expected, they taunted the crowd a bit before they played what is arguably their most popular track, The Knife.

The old and the new

The old was strategically mixed up with the new, as familiar tunes like Arm Yourself and Fight! Fight! Fight! were punctuated with songs from their latest album (which, coincidentally, was on sale at the venue for R120).

At this point, it must be said that band leader Greg Carlin wasn't exactly setting the stage alight with his personality and presence, but somewhat made up for the lack of showmanship with a couple of surprising covers. The first, which Carlin introduced as "a cover of a cover", was none other than Hurt, originally performed by Nine Inch Nails in 1994, and spectacularly covered by country and rock legend Johnny Cash in 2002. Sing-along value; immense!

Curved-ball cover

A few more familiar Zebra & Giraffe tracks followed, before another curved-ball cover was thrown - Chris Isaak's Wicked Game. Approval all round by the more mature fans. As the concluding crescendo of Isaak's mellow classic melted into the crisp evening air, the band launched into The Knife and the crowd went wild! They couldn't have scripted it any better.

With twilight descending and the business end of the show behind them, the band saw fit to wind down with a few more of their own tracks, before bringing the show to what felt like an untimely end. They left the crowd wanting more, picking up a few new fans along the way, and cementing the faithful.

If you weren't at Kirstenbosch, you missed out, but there are still a few Summer Sunset concerts in the pipeline, which include Jesse Clegg on 20 February, the final band aKing on 3 April, and an eclectic mix of artists in-between.

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