

# REVIEW: Steven Wilson at the Colston Hall

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By Michael Scanlan



Steven Wilson at the Colston Hall

YOU may have thought Prog Rock was dead. It ruled the world in the early 70s when bands like Yes, ELP and King Crimson strode the earth like mighty dinosaurs. Prog seemed to get swept away in the musical upheaval of Punk Rock, but really it just moved sideways into its own little niche.

Currently the top dog in that little niche is probably Steven Wilson, who was at the Colston Hall on Tuesday night to show prog still rules for a lot of people.

Far from a household name, Wilson is a very big fish in the progressive rock pond, but swims under the radar of mainstream recognition (to mix a metaphor or two). He's sold a shedload of albums, been four times nominated for the Grammy Awards and was crowned "King Of Prog Rock" in the 2015 Progressive Music Awards. He's also in great demand as remix producer of choice for all those top prog band of the 70s as they re-release now classic albums, revitalising recordings by Yes, King Crimson, Jethro Tull and XTC, among others.

The influences of Yes, Genesis, Crimson et al were present in Tuesday night's performance but there were plenty of more modern influences and creativity as the music swung from the melodic to hard-hitting – extremely hard-hitting – industrial metal.

The first section of the close-to-three-hour concert was devoted to Wilson's latest album Hand Cannot Erase – a concept album (we are talking prog, after all) inspired by the true story of a young woman who died in her London bedsit and was missed by no one for more than three years, despite her having family and friends.

Wilson himself wryly described it to the packed Colton Hall audience as "an hour-long descent into misery", but despite the grim subject matter, and the grim accompanying videos, there were still plenty of uplifting moments – like the gorgeous Perfect Life, the funky Home Invasion/Regret #9, and the astonishing crescendo of Ancestral – surely the only reason the audience stayed in their seats was that they were pinned there by the sheer power of the music.

For the second half, Wilson played what he self-deprecatingly said were "leftovers" as well as revitalised versions of numbers done in previous collaborations. The stand-out was probably My Book Of Regrets, another long, multi-sectioned piece but part of which was probably his poppiest number.

Wilson – despite his boyish, slightly nerdy looks – commands the stage well, striding around barefoot as he whacks out riffs and solos on his guitar, or sitting at his keyboard-cum-old office desk, and he's more than ably backed by his band, including regulars Adam Holzman on keyboards and Nick Beggs on bass – who may formerly have been in Kajagoogoo but now sounds and looks right at home as one of the great prog bassists. The band was completed by new boys Craig Blundell on drums (amazing how he manages to keep track of all those bewildering polyrhythmic time changes) and guitarist Dave Kilminster.

They were were also joined for a few songs by Israeli singer Ninet Tayeb, who brought an added depth, and whose contribution to Routine in the first half of the show, brought a truly spine-shivering moment.

The last couple of numbers – including the thrashing Vermillioncore – were played, bizarrely, behind what appeared to be a massive lace curtain covering the entire stage, which led to some breathtaking video effects.

The encore, included a heartfelt tribute to David Bowie with Space Oddity. Wilson saluted Bowie as perhaps the last example of a member of the musical mainstream also managing to be challenging and innovative. Wilson is certainly not mainstream, but he is challenging and innovative, and thoroughly entertaining.

#### SETLIST

1. First Regret/ 3 Years Older
2. Hand Cannot Erase
3. Perfect Life
4. Routine (with Ninet Tayeb)
5. Home Invasion/Regret #9

6. Transience
7. Ancestral (with Ninet Tayeb)
8. Happy Returns/ Ascendant Here On...

Interval

9. Drag Ropes (Storm Corrosion song)
10. Open Car (Porcupine Tree song)
11. My Book of Regrets
12. Index
13. Lazarus (Porcupine Tree song)
14. Don't Hate Me (Porcupine Tree song) (with Ninet Tayeb)
15. Vermillioncore
16. Sleep Together (Porcupine Tree song)

Encore:

17. Space Oddity (with Ninet Tayeb)
18. The Sound of Muzak (Porcupine Tree song)
19. The Raven That Refused to Sing

5/5

Read more: <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/REVIEW-Stephen-Wilson-Colston-Hall/story-28617105-detail/story.html#ixzz4967gg8dA>

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