

The Wedding Present European Tour 2005

Belfast - 16th February

Reviewed by Peter Curran

A rather nervous looking and apprehensive David Gedge took to the stage at the 'Spring and Airbrake' in Belfast to a packed venue. The mixed crowd of nostalgic mid-thirties guys and gals with faded Hit Parade t-shirts and local students let rip with a roar of approval as the opening chords to **Interstate 5** started to creep out over the PA and Mr Gedge snaked up to the mike to deliver another piece of perfectly crafted prose.

Interstate 5 is a seamless addition to the classic Wedding present catalogue of songs marking the evolution from the wonderfully innocent and optimistic earlier tracks (we get treated to a rousing **Once More** later in the set) to the reflective and mature **Perfect Blue**. This is really a fans gig with tracks from 7 different albums and the odd b-side thrown in.

A note perfect version of **Crawl**, which results in the first broken guitar string of the night, gives way to **Drive** from the criminally ignored Mini LP. This first quartet of songs only serve to wet the appetite and stir our memories before we are reminded how relevant, observant and gifted a songwriter David Gedge is, as the crowd are suitably impressed by the heart wrenching epic of **Queen Anne** from the new album.

Gedge begins to noticeably relax and even seems to be enjoying himself as he launches the band into **Go-Go Dancer** - which reminds me to search E-Bay tomorrow for a copy of Blue Eyes to complete my collection of 12 singles. There are also three Cinerama tracks given an airing tonight reminding us the Cinerama years.

A wonderful **Spangle** from Watusi is followed by the classic **My Favourite Dress**. It gives you a warm glow to see men of a certain age and waist size, sweating profusely as they leap about, eyes closed, mouthing the words to the soundtrack of their youth - even if Gedge did get a couple of lines wrong - or as he called it 'a unique version'.

Another couple of songs from Take Fountain - **It's For You** and **I'm From Further North Than You** (which is referred to in the introduction as a recent top 40 hit) keep the crowd jumping before a blistering version of **Kennedy** which prompts a massive singalong with a rather gentle mosh pit as we all smiled and grinned from ear to ear. Afterwards Gedge confesses that **Kennedy** is one of his least favourite songs much to the amusement of the sweat soaked crowd. Another new composition - **Perfect Blue** - is warmly received before a mighty version of **Once More** which Gedge introduces as 'a song released before some of you were born', a sign of the group's longevity. After **Ringway to Seatac** the slow building guitar intro to the mighty **Dalliance** from the Weddoes best album - Seamonsters - sends everyone into a frenzy including David as he flails about the stage thrashing his guitar and nearly knocking over half the band. Even though our middle-aged limbs are aching there no respite as the band launch straight into **Dare** before the words we all dreaded were uttered - "This is our last song and as usual, we don't do encores."

David confessed to being nervous before the show but he needn't have worried. The gig ended with **What have I Said Now?** which climaxed in a aural assault of wonderful guitar noise and then, suddenly, there was no more - despite the protestations of the crowd.

A wonderful night of not only great memories but also great new tracks that provide evidence to support the late John Peel's claim that Mr Gedge is one the best songwriters of the last 20 years. And, true to type, there he is five minutes later still wearing the same soaked top that he had on stage, selling merchandise at the exit.

Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful.