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Surreal world of Geordie comic

▶▶ Review

Ross Noble, Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth

IF Ross Noble wasn't a comedian he would probably be sedated in a top-secret laboratory where scientists could try to fathom the workings of his mind.

Watching Noble perform is not like seeing an ordinary comedian or human being. It requires an extra level of attention to keep track of the train of ideas, stories and jokes.

Picking up on every small detail, movement and out-

burst from the audience, time and again during his two-hour set he returned to jokes touched upon, or stories started, much earlier.

One story, about an audience member on crutches, started at the beginning of the performance and only finished at the very end.

Hecklers also added to the comedy material for the evening, which shows the skill and control of Noble.

The only thing moving faster than the Geordie stand-up's mouth was his brain. The show's title, *Non-Sensory Overload*, summed up the process perfectly.

It often seemed he had completely lost the thread of where he was going, taking wild tangents into the concepts such as using the Google phone as an instrument, before eventually bringing the audience back to a story he started half an hour earlier.

He breezed between the danger of predictive text messages, training shaved monkeys to pole dance and the perils of a meat diet.

A stylish and surreal performance by a comedian at the top of his game.

Patrick Gough

Rhod's therapy is a comic tonic

▶▶ Review

Rhod Gilbert, Lighthouse, Poole

THE sound of the Valleys rumbled through the Concert Hall on Saturday with the brilliant Rhod Gilbert and his distinctive comic style.

To kick off, the full house was treated to warm-up guy Lloyd Langford, who gave a full and frank description of the highs and lows of Port Talbot with great comic timing and wit.

Despite off-stage abuse from Rhod, Lloyd gave the audience more than

enough to giggle and guffaw over and left the stage to huge applause.

The gentle comic wave was soon ended by the appearance of Rhod, who launched into his routine, beer can in hand, and delivered punch after punch to the funny bone.

With several established TV gigs, Rhod's return to his stand-up roots were welcomed like a prodigal son – only with anger issues. This current tour – entitled *Rhod Gilbert and the Cat who Looked like Nicholas Lyndhurst* – details unhappy events in

the life of Rhod this year. His "minor irritations" included stropmy washing machines, panic buying and uncaring doctors.

His relentless tirade was both hilarious and cleverly written, the full horror story all making perfect sense at the end of this intensive therapy session.

For someone still relatively new to the comedy circuit, Rhod is original and intelligent in his comic style – argue back at your peril and don't let him near a washing machine.

Ever.

Emma Sutherland

Copycat Roses as close as we'll get

▶▶ Review

Complete Stone Roses + Kings of Leon, 02 Academy, Bournemouth

THESE copycats are about as close as you're going to get to the real deal.

Hanging on to the coat-tails of one of the most exciting bands to come out of Britain, the CSR have done well out of emulating their heroes – in fact, they've probably toured more than the genuine article.

So as you'd expect, they know the music inside out, which was clear from opener, *I Wanna Be Adored*, all the way through to the extended outro on show closer, *I am The Resurrection*.

Oh, how we longed for a reunion as they gambolled through *She Bangs The Drums*, *Waterfall* and *Sally Cinnamon*.

Support came from an accomplished, but pedestrian Kings of Leon cover band, but the night was all about the Complete Stone Roses.

I'm a vociferous critic of covers bands, but even I was entertained.

Gavin Haines

Quiet... genius at work



VIRTUOSO PLAYING: Nils Lofgren

Picture: rockstarimages.co.uk

▶▶ Review

Nils Lofgren, The Brook, Southampton

IT'S always a bit of a surprise when a guitar legend starts his show sitting down strumming a harp... and two hours later is tap-dancing to one of his best-known songs.

But like this remarkable gig – the penultimate show of a highly successful UK tour – Nils Lofgren is just a little bit special.

The second surprise of this "acoustic duo" night came as Nils stepped away from his harp, strapped on his Stratocaster and blazed an electric trail through blues favourite *Too Many Miles*.

With the bar set at the highest level from song one, Nils and superb multi-instrumentalist Greg Varlotta proceeded to enthral a rapt, respectful and highly appreciative packed house with 140 minutes of virtuoso playing, mostly on acoustic, but with

time to show off his skills on the piano and his new-found dancing shoes.

Like *Rain*, *Girl In Motion*, a spine-tingling *Valentine*, *You, Little On Up*, *Believe* and rare showings for *Five Minutes* and *No Return* whizzed by before Nils treated fans to another Fender blast with a requested *Moontears*.

As the perfectly-paced night headed towards its climax, there was even time for a hilarious faux pas as he launched into *Keith Don't Go* – surely the song he's played most live – and proceeded to sing the second verse first.

But Nils is as nimble on his toes as he is with his fingers and he offered a scintillating version of the classic song before careering through *Mud In Your Eye*, *Greg Varlotta's feet a blur* as he tap-danced in sync with the guitar.

Black Books and *No Mercy* preceded a full band backing

track and some remarkable electric guitar on Springsteen's *Because The Night* which saw Nils spinning, literally, on one foot towards its incendiary climax.

A fun *I Came To Dance*, with Nils and Greg on duelling tap shoes, and traditional closer *Shine Silently* completed a wonderful night from a man pushing towards 60 next year but still full of life, energy and tales of 42 years on the road.

Varlotta was again the perfect unassuming foil, complementing the guitar wizard's voice and fretwork with his own fine vocals, keyboards, guitar and even trumpet.

He vowed he'll try and be back again next year and those who stayed after the gig to meet the man and have their CDs and T-shirts signed will hope he'll stick to the promise.

Neal Butterworth

Funnyman is a breath of fresh Eire

▶▶ Review

Ardal O'Hanlon, Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne

THESE are tough times and doesn't Ardal O'Hanlon know it!

The Irish actor/comedian starts his new stand-up show by commiserating with the audience about the recession... revealing that he's had to sack his joke writers and outsource the work to India. It's a great gag and one of many running themes employed

by this razor-sharp wit.

With his air of childlike innocence and Wogan-esque accent, O'Hanlon comes over like a kindly if slightly odd uncle. It makes his acutely observed comedy all the more effective.

At times, perhaps, the show plays just a little safe, treading that well-worn path through subjects like the weather, being a parent, getting older and marriage and sex.

But O'Hanlon wins with his superb sense of timing

and assured delivery. He also has some hard-hitting stuff up his comedy sleeve.

As befits the man who made his name playing hapless Father Dougal Maguire in *Father Ted*, he takes a particularly barbed swipe at the Catholic Church.

Other targets included Ryanair and a group of people who turned up late for the show to find themselves subjected to some highly creative reverse heckling.

Jeremy Miles

Invitation well worth accepting

▶▶ Review

BSO: Invitation to the Dance, Pavilion Theatre, Bournemouth

DANCE seems more popular than ever today and this "invitation" came with a trio of stars.

Shai Wosner, soloist in Mozart's *Piano Concerto No 25*, proved a shining example of his generation with a sparkling performance that encompassed the difficulties with ease, delighting with the dancing

rhythms of the outer movements and affording elegance and serenity within the *Andante*.

Petroc Trelawny's introductions were a model of clarity and knowledgeable enthusiasm sprung with just a twist of humour.

At centre stage, conductor Danail Rachev showed a happy disposition that naturally infected the BSO's ever-willing players to toe the line, here readily evoking a line of camels lugubriously swaying

through desert heat in the Arabian Dance from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*.

From the same hand, the wonderful waltz from Eugene Onegin and two of Dvorak's Slavonic Dances, the thrusting No 8 opus 46 and the romantic, fading charm of No 2 opus 72, drew satisfying applause.

Weber's own *Invitation to the Dance* made a sumptuous start in Berlioz' brilliant orchestration.

Mike Marsh