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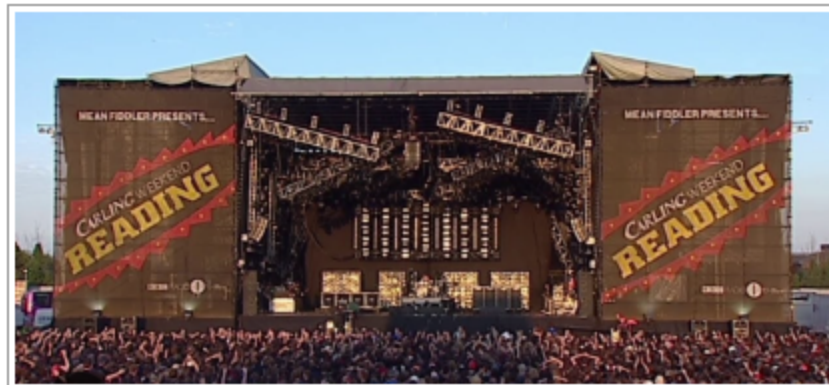
Live Reviews

The Darkness @ Reading Festival 2003

Reading Festival - 2003

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Unless you have been living like a hermit somewhere, you'll have heard the buzz about the latest flavour of the month that are The Darkness. Be they palatable or not, is up for debate. But hearken back to the era of glam rock where men wore tights and sang with a falsetto, they most certainly do.



Armed in figure hugging leotard numbers that would make many a 'World of Wrestling' contender green with envy, the brothers Hawkins leave no crotch unemblazoned. Cameo, eat your heart out! However you want to describe them their acolytes are devoted and many and not in need of encouragement. Through sheer energy or comedy, The Darkness have lit the fires in many a heart as self-appointed crusaders for the forgotten Queen / Slade generation. Aside from the visuals, there's a surprising musical ferocity. Not to say that they belt out their numbers in angst but in passion. Lyrically speaking The Darkness are Pulp without the moog or the obsessive perversity. Although Justin Hawkins does possess his own brand of je ne sais quoi.



Riding high on the media hype, and success of the Glastonbury Festival, The Darkness are no doubt expecting a repeat performance. The sun is shining, the crowd is keen, but something's amiss. Maybe the problematic PA system is to blame for the lukewarm response, who knows. The opening instrumental Bareback buoys the crowd; however the atmosphere is very much observational silence. Ouch. Reading between the lines Justin warms the crowd, "give me a 'D', give me an 'A', give me an 'R'....." Growing on me, gets the desired result and the bleeping ECG registers a living and breathing audience. Arms wave, heads shake, but life is ebbing away once more as the deteriorating sound quality means more trouble for the boys, whose exclamations of "you're making me weep!" betray exasperation with the crowd. But in the true tradition of sham rock, sunniest dispositions applied, they carry on gyrating like Mick Jagger or Phil Lynott. More gems from Permission to Land, are rattled off with that signature falsetto vocal and the newly crowned King of Strut bellows his appreciation,

"You guys are fucking rocking!" To him maybe, from where I'm standing it's more a case of rocking chair, pipe and slippers. It all just reeks of trying far too hard. With a momentum of sorts under way brave heart Justin is on a roll.



"So what's it to be, the clean or the dirty version?" With the dirty version affirmed by the now perked up crowd, revived by the mere mention of sex. "This is...Get Your Hands Off My Fucking Womaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaannnnn!!!" Gesticulating like a madman, Justin sings; "you're too fat and too old to marry, so they left you on the shelf."

With the latest single, I Believe in a Thing Called Love, and an epic version of Love on the Rocks with No Ice, on the cards, The Darkness falls, metaphorically and literally. The effort was a valiant one, but it's not the quartet's day of glory. Not to worry the battle may be lost but not the war, the unabashed spandex king seems undeterred.

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