

Reporting in from Clacton.

The last time we were here in Clacton it rained so hard that some bloke on the pier started gathering up pairs of animals. This time the sun shone down and Noah was not needed. Hurrah!

KK and I made the llooonnggg train journey from Bradford to Ipswich where we met with our favourite non-fan, Julie. After a very quick change Julie drove us to Clacton.

As we parked up I noticed the firedoors of the theatre were wide open. I could just hear the sound of music (no not 'The Sound of Music' - oh you know what I mean) coming from inside. "Sound check" I whispered to my companions.

Out of the two of them - KK the stalwart fan and Julie who isn't - which one of them do you think, made as if to go through the firedoors?

Yep.

So after we got Julie away from the theatre we had a very pleasant wander along Clacton prom (much nicer in the sunshine) and on to the pier (I was brought up in Blackpool. I sneer at other town's piers).

Jo had kindly arranged a meal for us in The Pavillion, where last year, we took refuge from the deluge outside. (Drinking stupid amounts of tea and coffee I seem to recall. OK wine might have been involved. )

The Twins, MM, Diana, Trudy, and Carol joined us for dinner. I think that was the first time I'd met Carol (if you're reading this – it was lovely to meet you!). Remembering the Great Bedworth Dining Disaster I was just a wee bit concerned in case Jo's reservation had gone awry, but everything was spot on. Thanks very much to Jo for organizing it.

Afterwards we strolled back along the prom and up to the theatre. The evening was too pleasant to go straight inside (yes this was balmy Clacton) so a group of us gathered at the door, chatting.

KK was facing the road. She suddenly told us to turn around. Now we've seen KK's Lee radar in action before. When KK says turn around it's as well to do it. We all swivelled like sunflowers chasing the sun. There he was on the opposite side of the road looking gorgeous in a white shirt.

He saw us, crossed the road and joined us for a lovely chat. We all managed to stop giggling as he approached and talked to him as though we were sensible intelligent women (albeit ones grinning madly).

He told us he had recovered from his 24 hour bug; had a laugh about a mix up with the concert times (the theatre tweeted 7.30pm rather than 7pm); and reminisced with us about his soggy Clacton gig last year.

A lady interrupted us so that her wide-eyed daughter could get an autograph. He smiled graciously and, bending down to sign, commented that he normally does this after the show.

He then turned back to us, told us he needed to get his suit on and said "I'll see you after the show." Ooo it was like we had a date.

When he left Julie said. "You can tell the ones who aren't serious fans, who are only going to see him once."

We looked at her.

"Yes! I'm a fan!" She declared.

In we went.

The theatre is medium sized and Lee had packed it out. Again.

The audience included Lee's family. Casey walked past us and Julie guessed who he was by family resemblance.

Thanks to the SNAFU about the start time, the concert began a little late. The wait was fun though, especially when front rows started singing along with the back ground music - 'We're gonna make you a sta-ar-ar-ar!'.

Given the reviews from IofW, I was intrigued to see what changes Lee had made to his set list and arrangements. This was a much more upbeat and energetic concert than Bedworth with more light and shade. More confidence too from both Lee and Amanda. Lee relied less on his lyric prompts. We had a few 'Meady moments' in consequence but he covered them well.

Lee looked utterly stunning in his black suit, with his curls neat and tidy, his eyes sparkling.

He opened with 'Where or When'. I thought at Bedworth that 'Where or When' made a charming opener, but this time I was blown away by the power and richness of his voice. No audio balance problems here. He ramped up through the song into a magnificent crescendo ending in a triumphant sustained note which lasted - well it was a long one!

He then crooned his way through a slightly jazzier version of 'Foggy Day', adding in a few dance steps.

I'm not going to try to record everything in order. I'll just tell you stuff as it occurs to me.

His links were much more relaxed and funny than they had been in Bedworth. I'm not sure whether I enjoyed his fabulous voice or his outrageous comedy more.

He told a much embellished story of his first kiss with Louise including miming using Lynx deodorant erm...everywhere. That led into 'I Fall in Love Too Easily', as usual.

He gave us 'Some Enchanted Evening' as normal, and also 'It's Almost Like Being in Love' which I think is a new one. It's a song that really suits him. I hope he keeps it in.

His intro to 'Singing in the Rain' was pretty much his standard story, but he had more fun with the song. He altered the lyrics to "Come on with the rain I'm in Clacton again", for instance, (which drew a delighted laugh) and treated us to some more of his comedy dancing.

Amanda sang 'Rhythm of Life', 'At Last', and 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' as her solos. Her confidence has grown so much. She delivered each with such gusto. Actually after 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' a man in the audience shouted "Follow that Lee!" and Lee mimed walking off stage charged.

I said in my report from Bedworth that his duet with Amanda - 'Get Happy and Happy Days are Here Again' - would be fabulous when they'd performed it a few times. Well I thought it really clicked into place at Clacton. I loved it!

Lee moved 'Feeling Good' to after the interval which helped even up the tempos in the two halves of the show. At Bedworth the second half seemed to have all the slower and more pensive songs, so I think this was a sound decision.

‘One More for the Road’, performed next to the piano with a prop glass of whisky (as at the Pheasantry) gave him an opportunity to really act a song. I remember Antony Steward Head reciting a Wolsey speech from Henry VIII, and marvelled at the subtle, repining drunk he played. Lee’s performance reminded me of that. You could really believe in his love-sick drunk spilling his heart out to a bartender.

‘Lullaby’ and ‘All of Me’ were so very emotional. I wasn't the only one to wipe away a tear.

Another amusing moment. After ‘The Way you Look Tonight’ Lee told us that he picked a member of the audience to deliver a romantic line to, only to realise too late he was singing to a bloke.

But the funniest was when he said how nice it was to see some young faces in the audience. Then he realised what he said. “Oh no! I've just alienated my core fans!” He tried to wriggle out of it, made matters worse, and had us howling with laughter.

The concert ended with ‘See You in My Dreams’ and following screams for MORE, ‘Any Dream Will Do’. The audience all stood without being asked (well everyone followed the front row’s lead). We all sang along. At one point his mike died and we just sang louder till it came back on. Lee smiled his appreciation.

The stage door was awkward to get to because of a van parked in the way. We didn't manage to get to speak to either Lee or Amanda and though Julie got a few photos she declared them no good.

Lee and Amanda then rushed away on holiday together (along with Charles Venn) either to Ibiza or to a caravan in Wales. Lee wasn't clear on that point.

Finally we finished with a little chat back in the car park. Julie mentioned that she wasn't going to Bury St Edmunds despite it being near her home, because I'm not going.

Jo and Ro persuaded her to come along and join them and the others.

Well why not? After all Julie is officially a fan!