

Shrewsbury – 27th April 2018

by Jane W

Ooo gosh it's the end of the month. Almost. So it's nearly payday, but way more important it's time for another dose of Mead. And after the house move (which went as smoothly as anyone can reasonably expect) I needed it more than ever.

Our first visit of the weekend was to Cadfael country – Shrewsbury. I've been to Shrewsbury once or twice before, and what a lovely place it is. Would there be time to see anything of the city? I hoped so.

I booked my train to give me a good hour for exploring. But the best laid plans of mice and Loppies go astray. Yes, you guessed it – train delay! Which meant I missed my connection, which meant I arrived stressed and grumpy with no time for even a quick look around.

Thank goodness I had a blooming good mate (cunningly disguised as Jane as far as the receptionist was concerned) to meet me, make me a cuppa and calm me down, before I ventured out to join the rest of the gang.

And what a gang we were that evening! The usual crew of other blooming good mates supplemented with a lovely lady I'd just met (– completely mad. My type of woman) and some of my very Stage Loppies.

For dinner (thank you those who arranged it) we went to the Istanbul Turkish Restaurant. If I am ever in Shrewsbury again I'll head straight there. In short it was the best full meal I have ever eaten on the Meady trip (though the prize for best single course goes still goes to the Haggis balls at Glamis). Great food, a glass or two of wine, and the company of friends – some of whom I've not seen in ages; one brand new – what in this world could make the evening better?

Oh yeah – strolling across the road to take our seats for another Meady gig.

Ah – if all my mates could have joined us it would have been completely perfect.

The Seven is good-sized, modern theatre with comfortable seats and oodles of leg-room, especially if you're lucky enough to be in row C (which we were) as there's a BIG gap between B and C.

There also happens to be a blooming good view. That became evident as soon as the gorgeous one strolled onto stage, and his opening lines of 'Pure Imagination' wafted over the not-quite-full-but-close-enough stalls.

Mmmm – Mr Mead, in fine voice, and with longer and more spirally curls than we've seen of late, captured his audience with his first smile. I think I might have been exhibiting a broad grin of my very own.

Lee always finds something nice to say about the town he's visiting or the theatre he's in. In Shrewsbury he also complemented the 'lovely group of people at the meet and greet'. Considering that none of the familiar fans took part in said meet and greet (that I know of: do

correct me if I am wrong), this sparked a few jocular noises of consternation from regulars, which set Lee giggling.

“Of course you are all lovely!” Aww! Well saved Mr Mead.

At the Lowry, I noticed Lee doing more actual dancing during ‘Dancing Thru Life’. (I mean during the song rather than a few comedy dance moves after it). He did the same right through the weekend, but there was something about Shrewsbury’s performance that heightened the song’s impact. Lee always acts as he sings; however in this case he seemed to be reliving his days as Fyero. I certainly did! (And No – I wasn’t just thinking of jodhpurs you naughty people!).

There’s no such thing as a standard Meady gig.

Between guests, Q & As and deviations to his stories, he always surprises us. Mind you on this occasion we came close to a ‘standard’. No guests, no Q & A, and few embellishments to his stories - not that it mattered.

On the other hand a couple of changes to the set list kept us on our toes.

A couple of swap arounds in the set list – ‘Paint It Black’ moved to the second half, while ‘Bring Him Home’ went into the first.

No ‘Maria’ – but the welcome return of ‘Everything’.

It’s a little bit funny – ooo to quote another Meady cover. I like ‘Everything’. It’s a sweet, jolly, little song, but it wasn’t one of those big, memorable numbers that I always looked forward to. That was until it got dropped. I really, really missed it!

I adore Lee’s song choices for this tour; he’s given us such wonderful mix of huge, powerful, set-pieces and sweetly melancholic ballads. But there’s little in the way of upbeat stuff.

‘Dancing Thru Life’ provides a lift in the first half – and of course there are all those comedy moments in his links and water-breaks...still another cheerful, boppy number for part two is a definite bonus – otherwise it’s a long wait till ‘Any Dream Will Do’.

So the reappearance of ‘Everything’ put a big smile on my face, and as I mouthed the words I noticed I wasn’t the only person in row C indulging in a silent sing-along. Nice! Thanks Mr Mead!

‘Everything’ wasn’t the only returner. No Q&A meant Lee had time for ‘When I Need You the Most’.

Can I be honest? Please don’t tell anyone, but I am not overly fond of ‘When I Need You the Most’. Oh, don’t misunderstand me – it’s a nice, little poppy, piece, but an unforgettable classic? Not so much. Unlike ‘Everything’ I don’t miss it when it’s dropped.

On the other hand Lee’s so proud that Gary Barlow (proper pop royalty) wrote a song for him - and that pride does shine through every line – I do feel so churlish that I don’t love it more. Sorry, sorry, sorry!

If ‘Dancing Thru Life’ was my highlight of the first half, my highlight for the whole show has to be ‘Anthem’. Oh wow! I mean he’s always impressive when he powers his way through ‘Anthem’ – but that evening!!! I’m leaving it at ‘wow!’

From ‘Anthem’ to the gentle beauty of ‘Blackbird’ and on to Lee’s signature song – ‘Any Dream Will Do’. No struggles with wardrobe this time. The intro started, he stepped off the stage and a second later returned in the iconic coat. His fans, swaying and singing along, were rewarded with happy Meady smiles. And in turn Shrewsbury rewarded him with a full standing ovation.

What a start to the weekend.

After the concert we took a leisurely bimble to the signing queue along with half the audience. Though close to the back, it wasn’t long before I was standing in front of himself, explaining that the CD I’d place in front of him was for me. (I’d already had him sign three CDs for friends and while I didn’t think he’d necessarily remember, I didn’t want him to think I was collecting signed CDs to sell on, tile my bathroom with, or any other strange and unusual use). Alas I missed seeing him greet his Norwegian fan, and the big hug her gave her. AAAAawwwwww!!! Well deserved!!!

I finished the evening chattering away with all the others in the hotel bar, eventually retiring about midnight, full of joyful memories of the day.

I was about to make more...

(To be continued)