

Review – Lee Mead, Some Enchanted Evening – Tunbridge Wells

By Paul Lucas Scott 1/11/16

Occasionally an audience is treated to a moment of pure musical theatre magic. For some it is the helicopter landing on stage in Miss Saigon, for others it may be the Phantom appearing all over the theatre simultaneously but for me it is watching one man open his mouth, and his heart, to deliver the most passionate evening of musical theatre music that I will probably ever see. The man is Lee Mead and, as his legions of devoted fans will happily tell you, that is how ALL of his concerts are.



Some Enchanted Evening is the name of Lee's tour, and the title of his latest Top 20 album, which features some of the greatest numbers from the musicals of the 40's and 50's. Not huge show-stopping blockbuster songs, but songs that Lee delivers straight from the heart.

He has chosen all the numbers himself, each for very specific reasons which he readily shares with his eager audience. Of course, to please those who have followed his 10 year theatre and television career, he also adds in a few treats from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat (the show in which he made his name) and from his latest triumph, the UK tour of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Mason Neely, who produced and arranged the album, leads the quartet of musicians, unusually for a Musical Director, from his position behind the drum kit. The grand piano, bass guitar and violin that complete the quartet are all played incredibly well and provide a surprisingly full sound when backing Lee, and who also get a chance to shine with a few instrumental numbers of their own.

Where or When from the 1939 MGM film Babes in Arms opens up proceedings and leads us into a musical cavalcade that includes Singin' In The Rain, from the 1952 MGM musical comedy, Luck Be A Lady from Guys n Dolls, Almost Like Being in Love from Brigadoon and, of course, Some Enchanted Evening from the 1949 Rodgers & Hammerstein musical South Pacific.

But the real heart of the show comes with numbers like Hushabye Mountain from Chitty, the Jules Steyn/Sammy Cahn song I Fall In Love Too Easily from Anchors Aweigh, I'll See You In My Dreams from the eponymously titled 1951 film and the 1937 jazz standard By Myself. In these

songs Lee is mostly just accompanied by the piano and, quite literally, a pin would be heard if anyone even dared to drop one!

In between numbers Lee talks of his life and career so far. How grateful he is to Andrew Lloyd Webber for the Any Dream Will Do competition and his first starring role in a musical. How much he enjoyed working on Casualty and the wonderful time that he had on the recent tour of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

He also talks, quite candidly, of his beloved daughter Betsy and of his, very public, marriage break-up and it is in these moments, when Lee looks silently into the distance for a second, that the “real” Lee Mead shines through. Not the superb singer and actor, but the single father trying to do the very best for his daughter and just wishing that, maybe, things could be a little different from how they are.

The heartfelt standing ovation at the end of the show is almost as predictable as the encore song, Any Dream Will Do, but, as I look around the audience, I see so many people who, like me, are enjoying a moment of pure magic...and hoping that they won't have to wait too long for the next one.

Five Stars