

REVIEWS

★ Poor ★★ Average ★★★ Good ★★★★ Very good ★★★★★ Classic

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Poorly singer struggles

Sarah McQuaid – The Nova Scotia Folk Club

SARAH McQuaid was born in Spain, raised in Chicago, studied in France, lived in Ireland for 14 years and currently lives in Penzance.

And her background was reflected in her choice of songs. There were American traditional songs and blues, British and Irish folk songs, a few contemporary folk songs and three of her own.

However, she had throat problems which meant that we didn't hear that voice, usually as velvety as a pint of Guinness, anywhere near its best.

Considering her vocal problems, she bravely opened with an a capella version of the American song *The Waggoner's Lad* before travelling across the Atlantic for the 19th century song *When A Man's In Love*, followed by one of her own songs, *Charlie's Gone Home*. The Irish song, *I Am Weary From Lying Alone* was mesmerising and the Appalachian song *Chickens Are Crowing* was beautiful. But her voice struggled with Bob Dylan's *Tangled Up In Blue*. She should be applauded for carrying on and the audience were appreciative.

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

KEITH CLARK

Athlete need some extra oomph

In defiant mood: Athlete frontman Joel Pott



Athlete, Bristol Academy

IN town to promote new album *Beyond The Neighbourhood*, south London four piece Athlete attracted a capacity crowd to the Academy.

The biggest cheers were reserved for songs from the first of the band's three studio albums, but although the new album has received mixed reviews, new tracks *This Is What I Sound Like*, *In Between 2 States* and *Second Hand Stores* were well received.

Having discovered earlier in the day at the Q Awards that recent single *Hurricane* had lost out in the best single category, the band defiantly played a captivating version of the song that gave the evening its undoubted high point.

However, much as they'd like to be, Athlete aren't very rock'n'roll. The rhythm section, Carey Willetts (bass) and Stephen Roberts (drums), look like two rugby club barmen and while frontman Joel Pott has some charisma, he's well short of brimful. Equally their crowd don't have the oomph to do any more than the odd bit of semi-vigorous hand clapping. The result being that the evening is rather a tame affair all round.

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

IAN TEMPLETON

Laughter all the way for Big Yin

Billy Connolly – Colston Hall

YOU know what to expect from a Billy Connolly show — a lengthy monologue stuffed to the gills with anecdotes, observations on human behaviour, the odd dirty joke and enough profanity to make even the most enthusiastic lover of four-letter words blush.

And so it was that The Big Yin bounded on stage at Colston Hall, basking in the rapturous applause of an audience who were already in fits of laughter before he'd even opened his mouth. One thing was for sure — he certainly wasn't going to die on stage tonight.

With his flowing white locks, trademark wispy goatee, leather waistcoat and tattoos he looked like some kind of Hell's Angel wizard — a biker Gandalf, if you will.

He began by recalling his first appearance at Colston Hall when he was supporting Peter *Where Do You Go to (My Lovely) Sarstedt* many years ago.

Then for nigh-on two hours with no interval (what a relief not to have spent any time in the bar beforehand) he kept the audience in hysterics with his scathing of all religions, his tirade against brown bread, knocking merry hell out of suicide bombers and explaining why a vertical



Great Scot: Billy Connolly

cuddle is preferable to the horizontal hold in bed.

A man behind me brayed uncontrollably like a donkey throughout, while a woman two seats to my right sobbed and gasped for air as though she had just suffered a bereavement.

Billy Connolly isn't a gag-smith, but is quite possibly the best storyteller that his native Scotland has ever produced. You sense that he'll never run out of anecdotes from his colourful life, or those of his friends and family.

It's always great to see someone of his celebrity and calibre come to Bristol — to see and hear him up close was a treat.

I just felt sorry for some of the audience as we made our way out of the auditorium, because most were clearly caused physical pain from laughing so much for a good two hours.

Rating: ★★★★★

NATALIE HALE

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Figures show constabulary is getting better

AVON and Somerset police have been given a mid-table ranking in the latest round of Home Office performance figures.

The force scored 11 points out of a maximum of 25.

It was rated as 'good' in three key areas and 'fair' in the other four.

It did not receive the top grading of 'excellent' in any category and was not labelled as 'poor' in any area.

The Home Office said the force was 'good' at tackling crime, dealing with serious crime and providing public protection, and treating people fairly and providing user satisfaction.

In the past year, officers have solved a quarter (24.4 per cent) of all the crimes committed in Avon and Somerset — a vast improvement on previous years.

Its performance in other areas, including protecting vulnerable people, implementing neighbourhood policing and working efficiently, was rated as 'fair'.

Police chiefs said they had done well in the Home Office report, designed to name and shame failing police forces.

All 43 UK forces were assessed on their performance, with Surrey and Lancashire coming out top with 20 points.

The worst ranked force was Bedfordshire, which was awarded only one point after being rated 'poor' in three areas.

The report said Avon and Somerset had made progress in all areas which were inspected, a comment which was welcomed by Deputy Chief Constable Rob Beckley.

He said: "This report makes encouraging reading and shows we are heading in the right direction.

"However, we know there is still plenty of work to do to continue this upward trend.

"The report recognises that we have improved in terms of the efficient use of our resources, but we know this must continue to ensure our communities receive the best possible service."

Dr Moira Hamlin, chairwoman of Avon and Somerset Police Authority,

Police force wins praise for progress

by Chris Allen

c.allen@bepp.co.uk

said: "The constabulary has progressed in all areas inspected.

"We welcome this encouraging report and will continue working with the constabulary to ensure that next year there are even greater improvements.

"We want to ensure the force maintains an emphasis on neighbourhood policing and delivering what local people want."

In three separate categories which measured performance against other forces, Avon and Somerset was told its performance at tackling crime and its levels of public satisfaction were both 'stable'. The way it uses resources and its efficiency was given an 'improved' ranking.

The figures have been published a month after the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, said in an official report that police have become too cautious about taking risks and need to undergo a radical culture change.

Force performance

- Tackling Crime: Good
- Serious crime and public protection: Good
- Protecting vulnerable people: Fair
- Child abuse investigations: Fair
- Domestic violence: Fair
- Missing persons: Fair
- Public protection: Fair
- Satisfaction and fairness: Good
- Implementation of neighbourhood policing: Fair
- Local priorities: Fair
- Resources and efficiency: Fair

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Crime victims: Rebecca Fudge, left, and her neighbour Claire Rogers beside Claire's car, which was set alight before Rebecca's car was stolen

POLICE told a mother from Lockleaze it could take six days before they investigated the theft and destruction of her car.

Rebecca Fudge, 24, believes speed is of the essence when it comes to finding those responsible for stealing then setting alight her Vauxhall Corsa. She says police must act fast because some neighbours have CCTV cameras which may contain evidence.

The mother-of-two says officers should visit Haydon Gardens promptly because her neighbour Claire Rogers' car was set alight 24 hours before her car was stolen.

Rebecca woke up on Sunday morning to find her Vauxhall missing from outside her home.

When she phoned police, she was told the car had been burned out in Wordsworth Road at 4.20am.

She was told a police officer would be out to take a statement.

But she said heard nothing until 6.30pm the same day, when she was told the force were dealing with 53 call-outs and she might

Why must we wait for so long?

have to wait until Friday. Rebecca said: "I've been asked by police not to approach these houses with cameras myself because a police officer is going to do it. But I'm worried some of the footage might get wiped if some of these neighbours only have one tape for their cameras."

Insp Mark Holford said: "There has been a spate of this type of crime recently in this area and police officers on overtime have been tasked to help combat the problem. In this case the call was graded a priority crime because of possible availability of CCTV.

"It would appear officers have tried to contact the victim."