



MUSIC

PHISH BID NEW YORK FOND ADIEU AT FAREWELL SHOWS

GUEST APPEARANCE FROM JAY-Z NOT THE ONLY SURPRISE AT CONEY ISLAND GIGS.



ARCHIVE - ROBIN - A - ROTHMAN
06/21/2004

BROOKLYN, New York — Whisps of fake fog spilled from the stage and dissipated into a light breeze rolling in from the Atlantic Ocean as 7,000 satisfied fans shuffled toward Nathan's Hot Dogs, the Wonder Wheel or the D-train.

So ended the beginning of the end for Phish, who performed Thursday and Friday at Coney Island's baseball stadium beside the sea, KeySpan Park. The shows launched the band's farewell tour (see ["Phish To Split — For Good This Time"](#)), which will culminate August 14 and 15 at a festival in Phish's home state of Vermont.

But fans didn't let any sadness show at these gigs: Even when the sky opened up and drenched the crowd on Thursday evening, their spirits couldn't be dampened. Some made light of the situation, jokingly singing, "You'll never get out of this rain," instead of "You'll never get out of this maze" on "Maze." After all, why curse the weather when your favorite band's breaking up and everything you see, hear and feel could be for the last time?

Or the first.

The shows opened Thursday with a new song called "A Song I Heard the Ocean Sing" that the group was performing live for the first time. Later that night, guitarist/singer Trey Anastasio dedicated "Kung," an extremely old, oddball number, to the participants at the U.S. Open in Southampton, New York, playing up one of the strange song's lyrics: "We can stage a runaway golf-cart marathon."

There was an even bigger surprise on Friday when Jay-Z, wearing a B-train subway tee, took the stage during the second set. Yelling, "Brooklyn! Make some *noooooise!*," he rocked his latest single, "99 Problems," with Phish acting as his backing band (see ["Jigga What? Jay-Z Performs With Phish And At Rock Radio Fest Over Weekend"](#)).

"They told me if y'all make a lot of noise, I could do another song," he said afterward. "What ch'all think?"

The crowd was wildly receptive and the group busted out "Big Pimpin'." Anyone who doubts the eclectic tastes or mainstream savvy of the average Phish fan need only have heard the audience nail both songs' lyrics to settle the matter. Avant-garde percussionist Cyro Baptista (John Zorn, Laurie Anderson) also joined the group during the hip-hop hullabaloo.

Of course, surprise guests are no surprise at Phish shows (Kid Rock has even appeared with the band), so was it far-fetched to believe Anastasio when he nonchalantly introduced Eric Clapton? The crowd didn't think so and instantaneously cheered — only to be met with a sly "No, just kidding."

But Phish had more than novelty and psych-outs working for them. The medley known as "Mike's Groove" and the "Divided Sky" encore were highlights of Thursday's performance; Friday's set opened with "AC/DC Bag," and set-list standards like "Tweezer" and "Character Zero" seemed to take on additional oomph.

And the sights were as energizing as the sounds. "Harry Hood," known for prompting intensely beautiful "glow-stick wars," brought about a stunning scene late in Friday's second set. With the stage lights turned downward, the neon tubes sliced through the night sky, matched by the huge pink, green and blue neon circles surrounding the stadium lights. Flashing white lights from the Coney Island amusement-park rides nearby seemed to blink in perfect time with the music. One can only hope that the ambience translated for the fans in more than 100 cities who paid to see the shows simulcast in theaters.

During Friday's encore, "Bug," Anastasio sang: "Nothing I see can be taken from me." On the basis of these two shows, Phish's final tour will be something worth remembering for a long time.

For more sights and stories from concerts around the country, check out [MTV News Tour Reports](#).

FILED UNDER:

MUSIC PHISH