



BARRY IN NEW YORK----A LOVING STATE OF MIND WANTAGH NY CONCERT EXPERIENCE-- MAY 23, 2014

OK, I admit it. I'm prejudiced. As a New Yorker, I knew we'd be in for a fun time (even though the beginning of this trip was a downer). Our plane was two hours late leaving Florida, and who wants to board a flight at 11 p.m. and arrive at the hotel at 3 a.m? This situation aside, my adrenalin started going into overdrive as soon as we were getting settled on the plane. The proverbial "melting pot" designation that is given to New York was showing itself as I watched the passengers getting seated around me. Rabbis in traditional garb, Hindus with turbans, Muslim ladies in their long silk dresses with head scarves. Yes I was headed home and was excited, for there's nothing like being in New York.

Then came the unexpected surprise. Flying along with us was Doug Emery, Barry's musical director, who is more than fabulous on stage and even nicer to chat with in person. Doug is personable and sweet, patient with fans (and a great musician.) It was an auspicious start to the New York concert journey. Having an up close and personal encounter with a band member is always a perk, and I was momentarily charged up and forgot my exhaustion, which existed on many levels.

After arriving at our hotel and getting four hours of sleep, I faced the day with trepidation. It was raining and misty and generally awful in Wantagh. My mind immediately kicked into "mother protective" mode as I thought of Barry singing in his first outdoor venue of the tour. I thought about his voice and the damp air, how the chill would affect him, how the rain would affect the audience and how frustrated I would be if this concert had to be cancelled. It rained on and off all day, and I worried more about Barry, although I knew he'd be a pro and give the show all of his energy, even though the crowd was going to look like they were puppies who'd been abandoned to the elements.

I had the fan party to worry about (separate article coming about this) and was generally frustrated because I couldn't control the weather. How dare it rain when Barry was here in my town, ready to lovingly embrace the New York fans and all the others who had come long distances (some thousands of miles). Having no control over the weather or the outcome of the night, I took my large black trash bag (to sit on wet seat?) and borrowed umbrella and headed with my cohort Debbi to the show.

Well, it drizzled and misted and tried to clear up, but that never happened. Jared and the Mill gamely took the stage and gave an energetic performance to a sparse crowd that was no doubt sitting in their cars or hovering under protective cover until Barry came out to perform. During the break, when Barry's crew was setting up the stage, the crowd started filling in, and I was grateful to see that the fans had braved the weather and arrived to see their musical hero in person.

Now here's where it gets a bit tricky. Barry took the stage and wowed the crowd (was there any doubt?) but moments occurred where the audience was thrown a curve ball. Barry announced to the audience that his niece, and Maurice's daughter Samantha, had taken ill and was in the hospital having tests. Now, having seen the concert previously, I know that Sam is a wonderful addition to the balance of the show. She has a lovely voice, duets with her uncle, and does a great version of "You Win Again". It was definitely a loss; and Barry's face betrayed his concern as he spoke of her and asked the crowd to think of her and give her their support. He mentioned Samantha more than once, and it was clear that his mind was troubled and that he was worrying about her. I could hear a collective sigh from the thousands in the stands, as they all were surprised at this news. It threw a monkey wrench into the pattern of the show, but just a tiny wrench, because now we in the seats were worried, too.

Then Barry did what he does so beautifully. He gave a performance that I think was more gentle and sensitive and maybe even more emotional than the others thus far, and the fans felt his sincerity. Springsteen's "I'm on Fire" brought me to tears. Barry was passionately embracing this tune, and each note gave me shivers. "Morning of My Life" was beyond lovely, and the lyrics are my favorites of all the songs. When he sings this piece of music, I want to ask him to sing it again and again so that I can picture myself "swinging on clotheslines" with him; and then there's "Immortality", which tonight seemed almost like a eulogy of love.

Admittedly, I am continually impressed with the man and his gifts, but he showed why he's one of a kind and has no equal. Even though he was dealing with the nasty weather and Samantha's absence, he brought the crowd to its feet and gave them exactly what they came for, which was seeing their favorite musician singing their favorite songs and giving a piece of his heart with every note.

Now it's on to Chicago. See you in the Windy City next week!