

LIGABUE: A DREAM CONCERT, BUT...

By Annalisa Coppolaro

27th April, Koko, Camden Town, 5.50 pm. The queue is already very long, in front of the doors of Koko, promising a dream concert: Ligabue and his band. On the tickets it says 7.00 pm, but it's only the time when the doors open, to over a thousand fans waiting and queuing up for Liga.

Koko is small but prestigious, it hosts big names and it's with no doubt one of the most popular clubs in town. The wait is growing like a fever in us, we are mainly Italian but there are English people. Many fans have come from Italy.

7.00 pm. The doors are still closed. In the meantime, the queue has grown a lot, almost all the people have a ticket, but of course there need to be all the security checks. While another tramp asks if we sell any tickets, in the middle of the queue some people are moving around huge rubbish bins just very close to the people who are waiting and are bored. Nobody likes having to move because of 4 rubbish bins put just very close to them. But they go on.

7.30 pm. We are in, finally, after all the checks, and after they confiscated our water bottles. Great. The place is getting really full, but what is really striking is the temperature in the room full of red light and smokes. It's much too hot here. People take off their jumpers and t-shirts, but we can't take off everything... Obviously nobody has got any water to drink, and the bar queue is already long, so we give up and we just squash all together while preparing our cameras and phones for the much awaited arrival of Liga. But what we don't know is that the wait is only half-way.

8.25 pm. It has just gone two hours and a half since our wait began. "Fuori, fuori, fuori (out, out, out)", the people shout. Sings and movements on stage. Is Liga coming out? "Luciano, Luciano, Luciano...". No. From where we are you can't see anything, but some people say it's Rio, Marco Ligabue's band. Some even know their songs. One piece, two, three, four. All good songs, of course, but we

are all here standing up in the 40 degrees of the room and still no sign of Ligabue. Some people just go away, they take the stairs and get out of the club, disappointed and stressed by a wait which made us feel like inferior fans. I speak to a disappointed couple who are shaking their heads. "What sort of organisation is this? Are we in a third world country? You don't treat people like this". And they get out, not to come back.

8.52 pm. "Here is our last piece for you", Marco Ligabue says. Some people are relieved and breathe a sigh of relief (as a way of saying, really, as there is hardly any oxygen left).

9.00 pm. "It's him! Please say it's him, before I faint without being able to fall on the floor as I cannot even move a finger" says the girl next to me who, like me, is only wearing a very thin top and has a very tired, damp face.

And in fact...

Luciano makes his entrance, and he emanates eroticism from every pore. He's wearing a wicked pair of jeans and a tight black t-shirt with short sleeves. He's tanned, fresh, and his smile repays us of these nightmare hours... Maybe.

Energy, passion, intense enthusiasm come down from the stage while he starts playing on his guitar the first notes of a repertory containing the best of the best, and even more. As a first thing, Luciano says hello to the people who have followed him from Italy. What about us, though?

The concert goes on while we applaud, sing, shout, and there is a very strong electricity vibrating everywhere between Liga and his people, while a jungle of arms and hands and lit-up screens moves in the wind of his notes and his strong voice, as strong as usual. We are really seeing him, there, Luciano, in front of us, there's a lot of us, even too many for Koko, and we are dancing in a homogeneous mix of sweat, wet T-shirts, a few tears and sighs, and arms and legs and hair and heads lost in the smoke and in the lights which are well-mixed, like in a sane orgy of pleasure and music, with Liga's voice which wraps around us taking us away.

The torment and the ecstasy, like in all real rock concerts. But why didn't they chose a bigger place? Maybe a theatre, the Barbican, a circus tent in the middle of a park? They should have done this, for an artist who fills up 40 thousand people stadiums. Koko is inadequate, really.

The songs, like in a spell, go on and on, playing with our will to sing. "Balliamo sul mondo", "Happy Hour", "Piccola stella senza cielo", "Certe notti", "Ho messo via", "Le donne lo sanno", "Urlando contro il cielo", "I ragazzi sono in giro", "Niente paura" (whose video was recorded in London), "Bar Mario", "Leggero", "Ho perso le parole", and "Buonanotte all'italia": this is Luciano's repertory, a very successful recipe for a hypnotised, charmed audience.

Liga speaks in good English, laughs, dances, plays, he puts his head back and makes us all go crazy in this large collective madness. The magic of his concert is all here, and we try to forget what was "before" it started, while, exhausted, we dance and we sing with him. When the music stops, we all cram towards the exit, not without a stop at the merchandise area. 5 pounds for a keyring: it's the least expensive thing. Far more expensive than any theatre souvenir. But after a night like that you need to buy a small something as a memory.

Bye, Luciano, and thanks for your voice and your poetry. And bye, Koko, thanks for having let us out, all of us, finally, just in time before asphyxia had the better on us.

We will all keep a fond memory of this evening, of Luciano's intense voice and dream songs, and of the nightmare offered by this club, which I personally will be carefully avoiding from now on.