Live review: Belgian superstar Stromae impresses with witty show at the HMH



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Belgian's own megastar **Stromae** filled a formidable two hour show at the HMH in Amsterdam on April 2nd. A show in which he mesmerized the audience of every age with both theatre, dance and his captivating voice. The rip-roaring skinny Stromae took the stage accompanied by his four piece band all wearing knee socks and bowler hats. Being one of the most in demand artists right now, many wondered if he would take it to the limit. What the Belgian maestro showed was nothing more than a fantastic performance full of showmanship. On a lovely warm evening in April, fans migrated to the HMH to see the man in question. Since his second album Racine Carrée came out last year, his star status has gone through the roof. Even though most people will not understand a word of his fast French singing and rap, his stage presence and performance alone will captivate you and even depict what he is singing.

On an impressive screen the audience could enjoy video projections showing Stromae and his band dressed in short pants, cute knee socks and black bowler hats. Everything that happens during the show, the light effects and the four band members playing in pairs on small elevated stages, are the components that make up a perfect theatrical chain. Stromae performs with everything he's got. He puts his heart and soul into the show and that translates back to the enthusiastic audience.

Even the jokes he has probably told hundreds of times before sound sincere and are truly funny. "My Dutch is not so good, as you all can see," he joked. His dance moves, the way his body sways to the groove makes you want to stand up and shake your body just the same. His band members are not just extra's in the maestro's show, they rule the stage, never playing out of key, looking like cartoon characters in their adoring outfits.

The audience loved every minute of the evening. Stromae's interaction with the audience is something many artists today can learn from. His unique voice has a reach of its own and his electro infused rap-singing got people going. Highlights were 'Bâtard,' 'Humain à leau', 'Ta fête' and 'Moules Frites,' a song he even sang a capella with his band mates as an encore after the show. Just Stromae and band, alone with one microphone

and a quiet audience. He also took ‘Carmen’ to great heights with his moves and the projection of a large dancing “Stromae army” moving and stamping to the beat. Also songs from his first album Cheese; ‘Te Quiero,’ ‘Peace or Violence’ and the almost all instrumental ‘Silence’ worked like clockwork. ‘Je cours’ was another song that gripped you by the throat while Stromae ran on stage.

Hits

The songs the audience had been waiting for were hits as ‘Tous Les Mêmes’ with Stromae engaging the audience in both his feminine and male side. During his wardrobe changes he also took the time to talk to the audience, making jokes and talking in Dutch. This got both laughs and ‘awwhhs’ from the fans.

During the “drunk” infused song ‘Formidable’ he showed both his strengths and his “weaknesses.” A true artist, charming and above all a genuinely sweet guy, who lets loose on stage but is still very much in control of everything that happens around him.

At the end of the show two more smashing hits were served. First of all a nineties infused ‘Alors On Dance’ with little winks to 1990’s hits by Snap! And Faithless. The song that made the show was without a doubt ‘Papaoutai’ where he danced his knee socks off, as did the sold out Heineken Music Hall. Overall an amazing show by a true artist, artistically performed to the max in both song and dance. The show at the HMH is not the last Stromae will do in The Netherlands. Fans can see him and his band perform on Pinkpop in June and at the Ziggo Dome in November. Merci beaucoup Stromae!

Review by Larissa Lambooij

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