

Emeli Sande – Live At The Royal Albert Hall (2013)

Written by bluelover

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01 – Daddy 02 – Where I Sleep 03 – Breaking The Law 04 – Enough 05 – My Kind Of Love 06 – Clown 07 – River 08 – I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free 09 – Suitcase 10 – Read All About It (Pt. III) (with Professor Green) 11 – Wonder 12 – Mountains 13 – Heaven 14 – Beneath Your Beautiful (with Labrinth) 15 – Maybe 16 – Next To Me

It's been a huge year for Scottish pop singer-songwriter Emeli Sandé. The 25 year-old's debut album, *Our Version of Events*, has sold more copies than any other in Britain this year — overtaking Adele's *21* in August — and she's had three top-five singles, including recent number one *Beneath Your Beautiful*, a collaboration with another young starlet, Labrinth. She also performed at the opening and closing ceremonies of the London 2012 Olympics — not bad for a former medical student who started her music career penning songs for Cheryl Cole.

This concert for the Prince's Trust, part of a celebratory four-stop UK tour of cavernous auditoriums, was an appropriate end for Sandé's *annus mirabilis*. Her performance confirmed what we already knew: she has a remarkable voice, plenty of songwriting talent, some rousing, direct pop songs — and a weakness for pushing the schmaltzy button a bit too often.

Sandé, dressed in a sleek black gown and wearing her trademark bleached blonde quiff, stretched out songs from her debut album and her turns as a featured artist over a two-hour set. Her backing band kicked up an airy soul-pop groove, making for a looser performance than at the Olympics, particularly on songs like *Tiger* and *My Kind of Love*, the latter of which allowed Sandé to unleash her powerhouse vocal in all its lush, melismatic splendour.

But while most of Sandé's upbeat songs veer well clear of falling into the asinine pop trap, the

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same can't be said for her ballads. She couldn't resist a long, dreary segment of the mushy stuff, backed by twinkly percussion and string sections. The crowd — which ranged from families to trendy twentysomethings, a mark of the ubiquity she has achieved this year — was mercifully woken up when rapper Professor Green appeared to give Read All About It a smouldering crescendo, his cheeky bravado delivering some welcome oomph.

The finale had an air of inevitability about it, as Sandé encored with Beneath Your Beautiful, featuring a guest appearance from Labrinth, and her gospel-tinged hit Next To Me, dedicated here to her new husband. She sounded like a different singer from the one who made her debut with the clubby dance beats of Heaven last year – a smoother, staidier one, the pop Queen of the Olympics. Time will tell if she's a better one. --- James Lachno, telegraph.co.uk

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