Blur - Parklive (2012)

CD1: *01. Girls And Boys (Live) (5:07) 02. London Loves (Live) (3:33) 03. Tracy Jacks (Live) (4:26) 04. Jubilee (Live) (3:00) 05. Beetlebum (Live) (6:01) 06. Coffee And Tv (Live) (4:58) 07. Out Of Time (Live) (4:43) 08. Young And Lovely (Live) (5:13) 09. Trimm Trabb (Live) (5:29) 10. Caramel (Live) (5:05) 11. Sunday Sunday (Live) (3:34) 12. Country House (Live) (4:28) 13. Parklife (Feat. Phil Daniels) (Live) (3:45)* CD2: *01. Colin Zeal (Live) (3:18) 02. Popscene (Live) (3:51) 03. Advert (Live) (4:28) 04. Song 2 (Live) (2:50) 05. No Distance Left To Run (Live) (3:58) 06. Tender (Live) (9:09) 07. This Is A Low (Live) (7:58) 08. Sing (Live) (5:50) 09. Under The Westway / Commercial Break (Live) (6:34) 10. End Of A Century (Live) (3:39) 11. For Tomorrow (Live) (6:42) 12. The Universal (Live) (4:45)*
Blur: Damon Albarn – lead-backing vocals, keyboards, hammond organ, moog synthesizer, machine strings, harpsichord on "Clover Over Dover", melodica, vibraphone, recorder, programming Graham Coxon – backing vocals, guitar, clarinet, saxophone, percussion Alex James – vocals on "Far Out", bass guitar, crowd noise Dave Rowntree – drums, percussion, programming, crowd noise

The stated ambition of London 2012 was, of course, to inspire a youthful generation. Tonight's sold-out Closing Ceremony Celebration Concert does inspire a generation, but one that was at university when you still had to queue for payphones to call home. Blur's first big hit came in 1991, the year before Team GB's double gold medal-winning cyclist Laura Trott was born, and support slots from New Order and the Specials – while enthusiastically delivered and warmly received – only underline this as a celebration of British music past.

Indeed, Blur's frontman and driving force, Damon Albarn, had said this might be the band's final performance. But then Albarn has always been a competitive soul, and you wonder if he's just trying to outdo the culmination of the Olympics for significance.

For a while tonight, that appears to be a losing battle. Blur are preceded by the BBC's closing ceremony coverage, shown on a giant screen. As union flags flutter, the 80,000-strong crowd bellows along to the national anthem and cheers as Prince Harry takes his seat. When Madness kick off the entertainment in the stadium, Hyde Park dances along, and you wonder whether everyone's forgotten they've paid £55 to see Blur.

Then, abruptly, Madness are cut mid-song and the screens withdraw to reveal our headliners, under a replica of Albarn's beloved Westway. The band launch into an incendiary Girls and Boys, and, for the next two hours, Hyde Park is theirs.

On a night when London is consumed with jubilation at an unexpectedly magical two weeks, and with melancholy now that it's over, Blur have the songs to match all moods. The crowd bounces as one to the giddy pop rushes of Country House, Parklife and Song 2; roars its approval for the affectionate hymns to the capital that are London Loves, For Tomorrow and new song, Under the Westway; then sways, hugs and gets a bit weepy to the big-hearted, emotional wallops of Tender, This Is a Low and tonight's closer, The Universal.

As Albarn's bandmates deliver the rousing instrumental finale to that last song, the frontman gazes into the crowd, blinking back tears, struggling to take it all in. Tonight, London has bid farewell to one of its finest fortnights. Whether it's also said goodbye to one of its best bands seems to be something Albarn himself is wrestling with as he bangs his fist to his heart and exits the stage. --- Chris Salmon, guardian.co.uk

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