

# NEIL DIAMOND A SIZZLING PERFORMANCE AT THE GREEK THEATRE

"Thursday, August 24, 1972. A hot, sultry summer night, in California they call it earthquake weather, with the air hanging heavy over the open, glistening shell of the Greek Theatre, over 4,500 people comfortable on the broad seats, over the countless others, the 'tree people' clambering up the mountain up the and into the surrounding trees, casting eerie shadows against walls, anything to have a glimpse of the stage and of the man who will fill it. Hot August night, and many people will be there again on Friday and the nights after that because, after all Neil Diamond has come back to the Greek."

"Then, softly, the music begins, the lights dim. Slowly, the heavy fire doors roll back; the music rises, the stage is a smoky, opalescent jewel in the darkness. But one light shines brighter than the others, a white pool in the brilliance, and for an instant, sound hangs suspended, only the air breathing.

"Then he is there, the crowd exploding. Neil Diamond as casual as if it's the most natural thing in the world, those 5,000 people demanding his soul. And for the next 107 minutes, he gives it to them, a spontaneous, exhausting display of energy and sensuality. And the people are right there with him, screaming and cheering and applauding and beseeching, knowing all the words to all the songs yet hearing them as for the first time, because that's what Neil Diamond gives them, singing as though he, too, was discovering the heart and soul of his music, every number unique and exhilarating."

It certainly was a hot August night in more ways than one. Those gathered were in for a treat. The growl of a voice, deep with sincerity, feeling and emotion was about to be unleashed on them. The new Neil Diamond, one of the most dynamic and power-packed singers of all time had arrived. There may never be a night quite like this .....

As Diamond succinctly put it, "*This is going to be special, I promised that before I came back to this theatre that we would do things for you that you that you will not forget for a while and that's what we're about tonight.*" How right he was!

Against his doctor's orders, Diamond went into the show with a raging fever of 102 F. As he put it "*the show must go on.*" He had made a commitment to his fans and he was going to keep it, come what may.

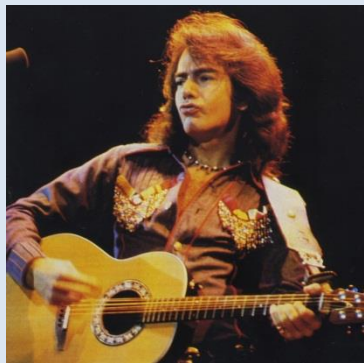
The audience did not know what to expect. As Prologue began, they were left wondering if they had come to the right venue. They thought that they had come to a rock concert, but instead were being treated to classical music by a full-stringed orchestra.

When the music and Diamond exploded onto the stage, he looked every bit a Greek god as the spotlight hit the solitary figure. He sang his songs like never before. To the total amazement of his fans, the songs that they knew so well were being completely metamorphosed before them. He was belting them out as never before.

They were the chosen ones, chosen to witness a butterfly emerge from commonality. History was being made before their very eyes ... and ears.

From that moment he held his audience in the palm of his hands. The gush and waves of adrenaline kept any feeling of being unwell well at bay! Diamond was slaying them, albeit in the nicest possible way. He had connected with them and they loved every bit of it.

The "tree people". There were several thousand people who couldn't get in. They sat in the surrounding mountain sides amongst the trees. Most came with bottles of wine and had a pleasurable evening. Not only were they viewing the concert for free, they were witnessing history being made.



Throughout the show, his parents, Rose and Kieve Diamond were quietly walking around the grounds of the Greek Theatre. Taking it all in. The love and respect these people had for their son was staggering. They were bursting with pride at their offspring's brilliant performance on stage. Their shy Jewish boy was putting on a sizzling performance before their very eyes. They were understandably concerned for his health and well-being; he was after all, ill. The raging fever was evident in his voice during the quiet moments of the show. Rose and Kieve later admitted that they had goosebumps throughout the entirety of the concert.

"*Electric ... his audience falls like plums at his feet.*" - Tone - Daily Variety.

Being ever the insecure person that he had always been, Diamond refused requests for television cameras to be present for fear of the concert being a flop! He had a few flops early on in his career with his audience walking out on him. For this reason, even to this day he still watches the exits! But worry was an exercise in futility that night. His audience were, it seemed, in a trance, being held by the hypnotic talent of the solitary man on the stage.

The special relationship he has with his band, the Neil Diamond Band, is evident; they are more like a family. They have a genuine love and respect for each other. They seem able to predict his wishes and moves. They are a slick, tight band and masters at their craft.

"*The lean, sensual performer was A TRIUMPH.*" - Michael Carmack - Los Angeles Herald-Examiner.

All songs were given a new treatment and life. Including *Solitary Man, Sweet Caroline, Walk On Water (WOW), Holly Holy, Soolaimon, I Am ... I Said*. When he said, "*I need, I want, I care, I weep, I ache, I am, I said, I am*" as an introduction to *I Am ... I Said*, you could have heard a pin drop. *Walk-OFF* was simply out of this world! Dennis St John was brilliant on drums.

As the show ended with *Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show*, the audience was drained as was Diamond. They had been through every emotion of love, sadness, loneliness, pain and joy.

"Too soon, almost before the moment is realized, it's over. The encore, the ovations, the bows - Neil Diamond has gone, in joy and triumph. And as the people begin to leave, reluctant, unwilling to relinquish the intimacy and the sensation, the silence again settles on the Greek, heavy and still until the next evening, when once again Neil Diamond will shatter the hot August night."

"... he moved the audience through many moods from joy to sorrow." - Sue Cameron - The Hollywood Reporter.

"More of a triumph, in every measurable way, than his stunning show last summer at the Greek .... Most of all, Diamond gave of himself." - Robert Hilburn - Los Angeles Times.

"I enjoyed the outstanding theatrical experience of my life, due to the unsurpassed and almost hypnotic talents of Neil Diamond." - James A Doolittle - General Director, Greek Theatre Association.

"The human voice is the most important instrument at our disposal, yet it is one of the most difficult to understand or define. You either hear it or you don't. It either moves you, or it leaves you cold ... it is more than just a sound ... it is the soul itself." - Neil Diamond 1974.

Footnote - The Hot August Night live double album, the first of its kind ever to faithfully capture and reproduce the sizzling live performance on vinyl, was an instant sell-out. At Diamond's insistence, there was no scrimping on the quality of the sound equipment used at the concert. He wanted the album to, as faithfully as possible, reflect and capture the sound and atmosphere of that hot August night. In Australia, where the greatest sales occurred, one household in every three had this album. And it remained the #1 album for 55 weeks. An all-time record!

- Richard Aspinall



New Age Music