Subject: An evening with Michael Bublé
Posted by Wayne Parham on Wed, 14 Sep 2022 23:12:42 GMT
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Kelly and I went to see Michael Bublé in Kansas City this past weekend.

I gotta tell you, the guy's still got it. I don't know why I say, "still got it" - he's only in his mid-40s - but he started doing this back when he was a teenager. No kidding. He started when he was 16 years old. He met David Foster - which is undoubtedly when things took off for him - and he made his first really popular album when he was in his 20s.

Please indulge me in a quick digression before I tell you about Bublé's performance.

Many of you - the folks that come to the Lone Star Audiofest every year - know that I always play Blu-Rays in my demo room, and that Michael Bublé is in heavy rotation. So it is probably no surprise to you that I would go to a Michael Bublé concert.

But it's kind of a surprise to me. I was always an "art rock" kind of guy in my youth. I listened to stuff like Yes, Genesis, Gentle Giant and the Moody Blues. Still love that music.

I was really introduced to "big band sound" in stages. I first became enamored by Glenn Miller, mostly because of my love of old tube radios. It was just the music that was originally broadcast to a WWII-era tube radio, so I found myself attracted to it. But that was mostly nostalgia.

Then there was the music everyone played at the audio trade shows I attended. The most popular music at the trade shows was Diana Krall, Frank Sinatra and that sort of thing. Seems like "Peel me a Grape" was played in every other room. And while some of that kind of wore me out, I did start really liking Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett, among others.

To bring the situation full circle, around 2010, I began to notice that there were some really good musical performances starting to become available on Blu-Ray. Everyone has trouble at audio shows making music selections - CD media is convenient, but sometimes doesn't sound all that good. Vinyl is awesome, but it's difficult to manage in a busy room. Blu-Ray presented itself as a great solution to me - the lossless audio formats combined with good mastering offered sound that was significantly better than compact disk, and might be as good or -sacrilege- maybe even better than vinyl.

So I started looking for Blu-Rays. What I found were a bunch of great live performances, many that were more interesting than the audio-only offerings. And that's when I found Michael Bublé. His Blu-Rays were some of my favorites. Friends of Bublé too - Guys like Chris Botti and David Foster, of course, have put together some really great Blu-Rays. My room is always filled with live performances like that. That makes my room very different than most other rooms, which are usually still sourced with compact disks or vinyl. My room is non-stop concerts.

Having said all that, you should know that while I have most of Michael Bublé's material on vinyl, I think I still enjoy his Blu-Ray recordings of live performances the best. That's how to experience Bublé - You gotta see him in person. You can't just hear him, you gotta see him. Because a big

part of the show is playful banter and orneriness.

Kelly and I were fortunate enough to get front row center seats. That was amazing, in and of itself. I was working one day in August, and Kelly called me on the telephone to tell me she heard Michael Bublé was on tour, and would be in Tulsa in September. I asked her if she wanted to go, and she agreed, so I started looking for tickets. I love Tulsa's Brady Theater, but it's a small venue. I don't really care much for Tulsa's BOK center, so I looked for other nearby shows and found St. Louis and Kansas City dates. All three shows are within an easy driving distance. The thing that clinched the deal was Kansas City had two tickets available that were best of house. So I pulled the trigger on those.

When we arrived at the T-Mobile Center, we went down to our seats. We were about an hour early, and so eventually we found ourselves in a conversation with the couple sitting next to us. The young man's name was Brooks and his lady's name was Barbara. Turned out that Brooks is Barbara's son, and that Brooks' wife couldn't come to the concert for some reason. I asked if either of them had seen any of Bublé's Blu-Rays and they said they hadn't. So I strongly suggested that Barbara should buy them, but that Brooks should not. My fear for Brooks was that if his wife saw the Blu-Rays, she'd be super pissed that she hadn't come to the concert.

We discussed what we thought would be the first song. I thought it would be one of the songs from the new "Higher" album. But the first song was, "Feeling Good." First song from the "It's Time" album, which is, in my opinion, the album that really pushed Bublé into the stratosphere. That song was the perfect first song of the night, 'cause it's "so Bublé."

This was my first Bublé concert, but like I said before, I've seen the "Caught in the Act" and "Madison Square Garden" Blu-Rays at least a dozen times each, 'cause I play 'em at every LSAF show. So I was mentally comparing the Kansas City performance with the Blu-Rays. That made the evening seem even more familiar to me when he opened with "Feeling Good," 'cause that's the opening number on "Caught in the Act."

I wondered how the 2022 show would compare with the BluRays. The "Caught in the Act" performance was done 18 years ago, so I thought to myself that he might have the same problem that rock-n-rollers do, which is essentially ageism. Members of rock bands gotta be young to be popular. But two things make this different: Firstly - think Rat Pack - "crooners" are cool in their middle age years and secondly, well, it's Michael Bublé. The guy's still got it.

I particularly liked his cover of Nat King Cole's "L-O-V-E" because it's such a quintessential crooner song. Nat is one of my favorite performers of this genre, and Bublé's playfulness works well when rendering it. And his song "Sway" just makes you want to grab your girl and leave the concert right away, if you know what I mean. Bublé knows it too. I think he likes seducing the crowd more than he even likes singing.

While Bublé is singing, his three dancers are gyrating as seductively as legally possible. It feels like a 1960s dinner club with wafts of cigarette smoke and bourbon glasses tinkling, and of course attractive hosts and hostesses that catch your attention from time to time. And right after the song is over, Bublé remarks, "that's just too sexy." He knows it.

He goes on to ask how many people are there for their first Bublé show. He tells them, "You don't know what this is all about. I'll tell you what this is all about. You think you're here to see some guy that's done some Christmas albums. Your wife drug you out here to hear that Christmas album guy. But that's not it. I'm gonna do you a favor. I'm going to put some air back in the tires. And when you get back home, you'll be doing some Bublébe-making!"

That's part of what makes Bublé's performances so much fun to watch. It might not even be "just part" - it may be mostly what's going on at the shows - not just the songs but Bublé's orneriness. The guy connects with the audience very naturally, making you feel like he's a guy you're hangin' out at a bar with. He just happens to be really good at karaoke, but between songs, you're talking and cracking jokes. Maybe that's more what it's like than a 60s dinner club, because you feel more connected than that.

The concert went on for over two hours. He performed the most popular songs from each album, as well as some other covers. He even did some Elvis Presley songs, and it occurred to me that was one of his influences. He's combined the singing style of the crooners with the stage persona of Elvis Presley. That's who Michael Bublé is: A little bit of Nat King Cole, a little bit Sinatra, a little Elvis Presley and a little bit of Andrew Dice Clay.

Videos of the show

Disclaimer: These (and the photos above) are just low-res phone camera shots, solely to capture a few moments. Kelly didn't want to put the phone in his face when he's two feet away, looking straight at her, which frankly, happened a lot. So instead, she "snuck" shots when he wasn't looking.

Fever
Sway
One Night With You
You're the First, the Last, My Everything (with Barbara - sitting right next to us - screaming "Michael")
How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)