

# Review: Love and Affection for Joan Armatrading at the Usher Hall \*\*\*\*\*



It was a scene doubtless replicated across the country. November 1976. A spotty-faced 14-year-old finally plucks up the courage to strut across the school disco dance floor and ask the attractive girl he's had his eye on for some time if she would like to dance. The song isn't one of the numerous glam-rock numbers prevalent at that time. It's a soulful, passionate number which resonates as much today as it did 42 years ago. Love and Affection, by Joan Armatrading would become one of those songs etched in the 14-year-old's mind for the rest of his life.

I should know. For I was that boy soldier. So, when one of the greatest singer/songwriters this country has ever produced announced she would be performing at Edinburgh's Usher Hall on Tuesday I was determined to see her live. I had waited more than four decades for this opportunity – and I wasn't going to miss out.

Armatrading's current UK tour is just about a sell-out

everywhere and little wonder. The three-time Grammy Award nominee, who has also been nominated twice for a Brit Award for Best Female Artist has performed at the very top since the early 1970s when she first appeared on the legendary John Peel Show on BBC Radio One. She has a stunning repertoire of nearly 20 studios albums as well as several live albums and compilations.

The expectant Edinburgh audience filled the Usher Hall nearly to capacity eager to hear the great singer perform her established hits as well as newer songs from her recently released album *Not Too Far Away*. Armatrading didn't disappoint.

She began by devoting the first half of her show to her new album. She displayed her renowned dry sense of humour by stating she didn't have a support act singing songs the audience hadn't heard of. She wanted them to hear some of her songs they hadn't heard of.

I've been a huge fan of Joan Armatrading for more than 40 years and it's become something of a trademark that some of her songs can take two or three hearings until they're fully appreciated. However, there are some from *Not Too Far Away* – such as the recent single *I Like It When We're Together*, *Cover My Eyes* as well as the title song which grab your attention immediately.

After a 20-minute interval it was time for Armatrading to give the fans what they had come to hear – some of her classic hits. She started off with *Down to Zero* and, among others featured *Travel So Far*, *True Love*, *All the Way From America* and *Rosie*. After *Drop the Pilot*, Joan sauntered off the stage saying 'goodnight' with an impish grin on her face. She knew, and the audience knew there was no way she was getting away without singing her most famous song.

With rapturous applause ringing around the Usher Hall,

Armatrading came back on for her two-song encore. The powerful and emotional The Weakness in Me brought a lump to the throat before the inevitable Love and Affection nearly brought the near full house down.

Moments later, she left the stage to a hugely deserved standing ovation. For more than 40 years Joan Armatrading has been wowing audiences all over the world with her brilliant vocals and song writing skills. As was proved at Edinburgh's Usher Hall on Tuesday evening Love and Affection are Not Too Far Away from this fabulous legendary performer.