

Timberlake talks

Interview and review: Justin Timberlake at the RDS

• by Rodney Edwards

And there I was, sitting on an extremely uncomfortable concrete slab-like seat in the backend of nowhere at the weekend, waiting for Justin Timberlake (right) to sing and jump about on stage a bit.

Thousands of people packed into the open-air RDS in Dublin to see the megastar.

I'll be frank. I've never particularly liked Timberlake – he sings like a girl for a start, and Dublin would never be the first place I'd want to go and visit because it takes nearly four hours to get there.

And I've always thought of Dublin as a sluggish, unexciting place. But how wrong was I? The place is vibrant, fast moving and overflowing with prosperity. It's no wonder a global superstar like Justin Timberlake decided to play his 75th show here.

Black Eyed Peas star Fergie kicked off proceedings as JT's support act and the assembled gathering strangely lapped up her boisterous screeching of absurd tosh. The singer stretched her entire back catalogue of about four songs into a half an hour set, which included three costume changes. Her rather excruciating recital of 'London Bridge' and the other one about 'humps' rang through the air like an erratic siren, and then she went on to sing other tracks that I can't really be bothered naming because they were so unbelievably gruesome.

For the time had arrived, as Timberlake rose from beneath the stage on some

sort of mechanical podium thing, opening his set with 'Futuresex Lovesound', taken from his new album of the same name. Accompanied by a troupe of dancers and an eight-strong band, the crowd went wild as he performed a host of Grammy Award-winning 'Justified' favourites including 'Sexy Ladies', 'Cry Me a River' and the smash hit 'Rock Your Body'. During the interval, music producing legend Timbaland took to the decks, firing up some hip-hop R'n'B beats, then Justin returned with fresh new hits 'My Love', 'What Goes Around Comes Around' and 'SexyBack' finishing the two-and-a-half-hour gig in a riotous, lively Timberlake way.

And after the show, I found out a little about the Memphis born star, including how the energetic performer has coped with recently being on the road in England, Scotland, France, Belfast, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands with his Futuresex Lovesound World Tour. "Performing onstage is all about reacting in a grand way. You're playing an arena of seventeen or eighteen thousand people and it's your job to make sure the person at the back feels as cool as the person all the way in the front. Being on stage is a bit of a facade. You get to walk out there and be the coolest version of yourself that you could possibly have imagined and then you come off stage and you're just like everyone else," he said.



Timberlake grew up in Millington, a small town just north of Memphis. His first attempts at a singing career saw him singing country music songs on American TV show Star Search as 'Justin Randall'. "I grew up in Tennessee where you either play football or you don't do anything at all so I was a bit of a loner being interested in music. I was not cool. It was football or die!" reminisces Justin. "I would come to school, and was bit of an outcast but I wasn't bullied too much, thank God. I was very shy as a kid but when I found out I could perform and have people's attention everything changed for me. My mum likes to joke that until I was eight or nine I only knew what my sneakers looked like because I constantly walked around with my head down. But all of a sudden the stage made sense and that's what brought me out of my shell and a monster was created. It felt like it came naturally and it

was fun. Even as a kid I would find the one person whose attention I didn't have and I would zone in on that person. It became a challenge," he said.

In 1993, he got a real taste of showbiz when he joined the ranks of The Mickey Mouse Club. There he met future girlfriend and pop superstar Britney Spears, future tourmate Christina Aguilera, and future bandmate JC Chasez. Timberlake rose to fame as the front man of pop boy band 'N Sync during the 90s and has won four Grammy Awards. In 2002, he released his debut solo album, 'Justified', which sold over seven million copies worldwide and catapulted him to megastar status. "It definitely messes with your mind a little bit when you're a teenager and not equipped to deal with all the attention but I learned very quickly that the more I didn't pay attention to it, the more I realised what a soap opera it was and you have to

remove yourself from it otherwise it will drive you completely insane. My parents instilled in me the mindset of always being humble so I'd like to believe that all the teen idol stuff went in one ear and out the other," he said.

Timberlake's second solo release, FutureSex/LoveSounds, was released in 2006 and helped him flog a staggering 14 million albums worldwide. "I'm just a very passionate person in everything I do. I really believe that whenever you do something you should put everything into it - otherwise, it's really not worth it," admits Justin. "With my songs, I'm a very melody-driven writer and I have a rule that I don't write anything down because if I can't remember the melody than it wasn't worth remembering. So it's my way to test myself in the studio. When I was a kid I could sing pretty well so melody always made a lot of sense to me," he said.

Like Robbie Williams, Timberlake has exploited the public's fascination with his private life. Williams' songs portray him as a troubled genius, but Timberlake's aims are more straightforward.

And you have to admire the guts of the boyband member who strikes out alone. There is always a high risk of failure, but not as it seems for Justin, he's a successful singer, writer, producer, director, businessman and actor. And, as his life seems to get busier and busier, does he have any plan to slow down a bit?

"I enjoy seeking complete silence and time on my own when I want, you have to offset all that activity with nothing or with something that's fun to you and relaxing. But you know what the most boring thing is in the world? Silence." finishes Timberlake. Good answer.