

Review: Tubular Bells For Two, Assembly One, George Square



Tubular Bells

By LIAM RUDDEN

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MIKE Oldfield had the stage thrown into darkness before playing Tubular Bells at the Edinburgh Playhouse, more years ago than I now care to remember.

His entrance, however, was given away by the orange glow from his cigarette. A roar erupted long before stage lights revealed him, along with his army of musicians.

By contrast, although they too enter in a blackout, bare-footed multi-instrumentalists Daniel Holdsworth and Aidan Roberts go unchampioned as they settle behind their banks of keyboards.

“Alright?” quips Roberts, as though to check an audience is present.

It gets a laugh. He adds: “We’re now going to tune every instrument.”

Another laugh, more nervous this time – the pair are surrounded by keyboards, guitars, drums, synths, a glockenspiel and, naturally, tubular bells.

Well, this is Tubular Bells For Two – where Oldfield had his orchestra, Holdsworth and Roberts have arranged the entire score to be “played out by just two blokes”.

They don’t tune every instrument, and we’re off, an eerie blue wash building as the opening bars, now forever associated with *The Exorcist*, reach into the auditorium, sending tingles down collective spines.

What follows is a tour de force in every sense of the phrase as the two switch between instruments with such precision and speed that at times it’s like watching a piece of maniacally choreographed physical theatre.

A dropped plectrum leaves room for a quick ad-lib before they continue, never really losing a beat. It highlights the beauty of this performance and reinforces the fact that this is no straightforward facsimile of the famous recording – if you want that, you may as well listen to the album.

No, Tubular Bells For Two is a live music experience, a virtuoso performance from two musicians at the top of their game.

The physical demands of [the concert](#) leave both drenched in sweat and the audience on the edge of their seats as Holdsworth races from instrument to instrument, a Roland SH-201 being the workhorse of the set.

Clever, witty and totally engaging, Tubular Bells has never been more raw or vital – this is Oldfield’s music as it should be heard, rocking out live and loud. Don’t miss it.

This will be THE show of the 2012 Edinburgh Fringe and it's already selling out. As for the audience, so reticent as the lights dimmed at the start, well, they were on their feet and roaring by the end.

Until August 27

LIAM RUDDEN

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