

Eric Clapton Performs Rare Birthday Concert - Hard Rock in Fort Lauderdale

Written by Sally Rosen - OFC Contributor



[Eric Clapton](#)

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2013 Rewind: Review of Eric Clapton Rare Birthday Concert

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March 29-30, 2013. Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood, Florida was graced with two back to back performances celebrating Eric Clapton's 50th anniversary tour and Eric's 68th birthday! The Hard Rock Hollywood was befitting for the landmark birthday weekend since both Slowhand and Hard Rock are uniquely intertwined.

Three decades prior, Clapton gave his signed Fender Lead II guitar to the Hard Rock Cafe to reserve his favorite bar stool. Unbeknownst, Eric's largess on a whim gave birth to a monumental music memorabilia industry. Fast forward one week after the Hollywood concerts on April 8, Eric and Hard Rock International launched a merchandise program benefiting Crossroads Centre Antigua.

As for the "Further On Up The Road" tour, the set lists were similar but it was undeniable that the second night's performance had more brilliance. The rare birthday concert was distinguished by Eric's dapper dress for the occasion, a maroon paisley shirt and black vest, edgier guitar solos and Eric's sincere words of appreciation to the audience.

"Thank you for coming to my birthday party! I usually have the day off on my birthday but times are hard (laugh). You were such a great audience last night we thought we'd come back and do it again!"

Opening "Hello Old Friend" struck an affable chord with the audience as the most recognizable 70'S hit from NO REASON TO CRY and welcomed new band member Greg Leisz on pedal steel guitar. An upbeat transition into "My Father's Eyes" soared with a hint of Latin percussion and acoustic guitar syncopation. The PILGRIM eighties hit progressed into a simpatico duo of Clapton acoustic and Bramhall slide guitars.

The show boasted fresh surprises in the band and the songs. "Tell The Truth" was not one of them. "Tell The Truth" has become a set list standard for the past several years of Clapton tours. While Doyle Bramhall, II delivers on vocals and guitar, the Derek and Dominos song sounded a bit tired out in 2013.

Strong recovery by OLD SOCK, Eric's latest album released earlier in March, as the show rolled out a riveting "Gotta Get Over." The catchy tune, features Chaka Kahn on the 2013 record, boasted fervent backing vocals by Michelle John and Sharon White, explosive amplified volume and a signature Slowhand guitar solo. The R&B opus ended in roaring audience applause.

The fresh vibe kept its momentum as Eric announced "We're going to feature Greg Leisz now on a song called My Woman Gotta Black Cat Bone." Magnificent mojo melody performed with

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authentic bluesman virtuosity. The soulful flavor of the evening was simmering as fans got a taste of “Got To Get Better In A Little While”, a song that Eric performed for 12-12-12 Sandy Relief Concert. This Derek and the Dominos surging tune, with electric guitar and wah wah pedal solos, highlighted the synergy of the three power house guitarists – Clapton, Bramhall and Leisz.

The next surprise of the 2013 tour band was Paul Carrack formerly of bands Squeeze, Roxy Music, Mike + The Mechanics, Ace. Eric announced Paul to feature eighties Squeeze hit “Tempted.” While clearly “Tempted” was 100% Carrack’s song, Eric added a finishing touch with pulsating guitar riffs in the background flowing into a powerful solo. “Tempted” shimmered as a tour de force.

In the Florida groove, Bob Marley’s “I Shot The Sheriff” charged up the stage as one of Clapton’s most acclaimed hits. 461 OCEAN BOULEVARD, recorded four decades earlier in Golden Beach (Miami), is only 20 miles from the Hard Rock venue for the nostalgic Clapton buff.

The acoustic set was an exquisite centerpiece to the show and this year Eric sported a sparkling blue Martin guitar. “Driftin’,” followed by upbeat “Lay Down Sally” brought on an audience sing along. Steve Jordan on snare drum seated next to Clapton kept steadfast intensity on Eric’s pace and fast finger guitar. Time stood still in the Florida arena, as “Tears In Heaven” was brought back to the set list with playful, upbeat guitar riffs on the intro. Eric’s vocals and Greg’s pedal steel guitar added endearing tenderness to the Grammy gem.

“Good Night Irene” from OLD SOCK was performed at the Friday night show. An interplay of mandolin and slide guitar infused authenticity into this American folk standard. “Wonderful Tonight” spawned its charm for snuggling sweet hearts in the audience. Another surprise of the evening was Ace seventies hit “How Long” featuring Paul Carrack on lead vocals. Jazzy rhythm and keyboards lead into a mesmerizing Clapton guitar solo.

It wouldn’t be an Eric Clapton concert without Robert Johnson. “Stones In My Passway”, “Love In Vain”, “Crossroads” and “Little Queen of Spades” were dished out with gusto. The strong presence of a mandolin along with an inspiring slide guitar played by Doyle Bramhall trumped on “Stones in My Passway.” “Love In Vain” smoldered as Eric hummed “Hmm hmm hmm.”

“Cocaine” showcased Chris Stainton’s jazzy keyboard runs. Saturday night fans were privy to a song sung only once on the 2013 tour; “Happy Birthday” to Eric as the audience drowned out the band! Encore of “Sunshine of Your Love” lead into a final surprise of the evening, a righteous R&B delivery of “High Time We Went.” The encore featured Clapton guitar riffs, Willie Weeks pulsating bass and a whaling organ as Paul Carrack mustered up his chops on the Joe Cocker house rocker. The audience departed hoping to catch Eric Clapton and his band “Further On Up The Road”.