

August 29, 2012

HUFF POST ENTERTAINMENT

Edition: U.S. ▾



FRONT PAGE POLITICS BUSINESS MEDIA CELEBRITY TV COMEDY FOOD STYLE ARTS BOOKS LIVE | ALL SECTIONS

Entertainment | Celebrity TV Political Hollywood Features Hollywood Buzz Videos



Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors

HOT ON THE BLOG

Bill Moyers
John Hillcoat

Dean Baker
Booby Bowden

HuffPost Social Reading



Michael Giltz

GET UPDATES FROM MICHAEL GILTZ

Freelance writer

Like 102

Music: Tallest Man on Earth Strides Confidently Through New York

Posted: 06/21/2012 2:39 pm

React > Inspiring Funny Hot Scary Outrageous Amazing Weird Crazy

Follow > Music , Video , Bob Dylan , The Tallest Man On Earth , Folk Music , Kristian Mattson , Pop Music , Town Hall , Entertainment News

SHARE THIS STORY

Submit this story

TALLEST MAN ON EARTH TOWN HALL

Performance: *** 1/2 out of ****

Crowd * 1/2 out of ****

When they announced the solo act [Kristian Mattson](#), a.k.a. The Tallest Man On Earth, was playing Town Hall,

I was a little nervous. Really? Town Hall? He seemed so under-the-radar to me, I was worried no one would come. I'd barely seen any interviews with him in the media and every time I mentioned him to music friends, I seemed to be starting from scratch. I only stumbled on his name in a UK magazine and after purchasing his last album online on the spur of the moment it became my last-minute [favorite record of 2010](#). But was anyone else waiting to see him in concert? I would have expected a much smaller place like Mercury Lounge for his return to New York.

Instead of a half-empty venue filled with old folkies, the NPR/Richard Thompson set (a.k.a. me), Town Hall was sold out for two nights and filled mostly with young people who had probably discovered TMOE online just like me, in an organic style that made it seem he was their own personal discovery. A 29-year-old Swede, Mattson sings with an Americana twang, records in English, posts songs online and paired with indie labels like [Dead Oceans](#) to get the word out. And just like that, he can reach the world. Here he is trotting the globe and performing in New York the very week that his excellent new album [There's No Leaving Now](#) debuts at #35 on the Billboard album charts. (Sure, these days you can top the charts with less than 100,000 copies in sales some weeks, but still... pretty great.)

I haven't anticipated seeing a new act in concert this much in years and Mattson did not disappoint. He prowled out of the wings like a cat and it was immediately clear he had presence to spare. Mattson would not stand at the mike and declaim songs with the faux modest demeanor of a folkie. He is a performer and presumably years of dealing with rowdy crowds in bars has paid off. The stage was filled with five guitars standing in a row on one side (electric and acoustic, each tuned in a different manner) and a piano on the other he assayed once or twice. Mattson soaked up the applause, somehow managing to look genuinely touched and as if it were his due at the same time.

He immediately launched into "To Just Grow Away," the opening track of his new album, and we were

SPONSOR GENERATED POST



Help Us Write 'The Words'

Quick Read | Comments (27) | 08.20.2012

FOLLOW US

MOST POPULAR ON HUFFPOST

1 of 2

[Chipotle Busted For Cheating Customers Out Of Pennies](#)

Like 1k

[Republican Attendees Thrown Out After Racist Attack On CNN Worker](#)

Like 11k

[RPatz Agrees To Meet KStew But Is Selling Their Home](#)

Like 76

[MAP: Hurricane Isaac's Path Aims For Gulf Coast](#)

Recommend 278

[PHOTO: The Queen Rolls In A Range Rover Wearing A Hoodie](#)

Like 1k

[Deaf Boy Asked To Make Controversial Change \(VIDEO\)](#)

Like 4k

off. Mattson's voice boomed and swooped throughout Town Hall, merging perfectly with his guitar. He played with aplomb, easily navigating the annoying whoops of audience members who think any quiet moment is the perfect chance to belt out their approval. There isn't an artist alive who wants people to bellow and shout while they're performing -- they're onstage for a reason -- but still yahoos think they must be heard. It was literally one of the most annoying crowds in memory. Kids constantly brandished cell phones to take pictures because of course if you're not recording an event it hasn't really happened. Guards roamed the aisles with flashlights, repeatedly getting people to desist. It was a shame they didn't flash the face of the schmuck five rows behind me who spent the entire show shouting out "Ridiculous!" at the top of his voice after every musical passage and then mocking the people around him who were trying to listen by saying, "It's a concert!" Yes, but not a Bon Jovi concert at a football stadium.

I was thoroughly impressed by Mattson's poise throughout. He has the showman's gift for knowing how to ride the wave of audience emotion, pausing just long enough on a held note before launching into another passage or raising his vocals a notch to quiet the chatter. Interestingly, his two forays onto the piano silenced the crowd almost completely. Why does acoustic guitar equal rowdy banter but a piano relative silence? At the end of his first piano number, he pointedly said, "Thank you for listening." The yahoo behind me didn't get the message.

None of those distractions prevented Mattson's performance from being memorable. Song after song tumbled out of him, including many of the songs on his new album, like upbeat peak "1904" (Mattson had a playful time with his enunciation on that one) to crowd favorite "King Of Spain," heard here on a live performance on the UK show hosted by Jools Holland. (I couldn't find a live performance or video of songs from his new album but you can hear more of his work on [his MySpace page.](#))

What I was most impressed by after the sheer songwriting talent, singing and playing was his assured presence. Mattson displayed a wry wit and self-awareness that was striking and funny and wholly entertaining. In the middle of one number, he would suddenly fall into a chair placed towards the back of the stage almost as if he'd just discovered it for the first time. A photographer taking a picture became a moment of weird discovery as if he was puzzled to realize people were watching him. He'd wipe his face with a towel and then toss it away with mock disdain. When he used a pick, Mattson invariably tossed it aside in anger at the end of each number in a bit that became more amusing every time. This is an artist with real presence and one you immediately sense you'll be seeing again in concert five years, ten year, twenty years from now.

And of course at the heart of it are the songs. It's easy and true to tag Mattson with the Dylan-esque tag. But this isn't the Dylan of worldly affairs, but the romantic, funny Dylan, the one who can savor love but knows it's slipping away even as he's enjoying it. Mattson's wife Amanda Bergman performs under the name Idiot Wind, just to make the Dylan reference complete and she joined him on the final number, "Thrown Right On Me" (from his most recent EP *Sometimes The Blues Is Just A Passing Bird*). Their voices blended beautifully.

His new album *There's No Leaving Now* is a step forward sonically. Where his first two albums -- *Shallow Grave* and *The Wild Hunt* -- featured simply Mattson and his guitar, the new record features just a tad more instrumentation and the occasional double tracking so Mattson can accompany himself. Drums, clarinet and the like all make an appearance, but it's a modest one. It's still essentially Mattson alone with his powerful, growling voice that can soothe and command and plead in equal measure. And that's what we found onstage, a man who can fill a hall with his voice and guitar and stop your heart.

I haven't lived with the new album enough yet but it will certainly be on my best of the year list. I tend to recommend Dylan fans start with *The Wild Hunt* but you can't go wrong wherever you start. Because I

[GOP Approves Abortion Ban](#)
Recommend 9k

[Isaac Balloons Into A Hurricane, New Orleans Threatened](#)
Recommend 693

[Limbaugh's Wild Isaac Conspiracy](#)
Like 7k

DON'T MISS HUFFPOST BLOGGERS 1 of 5

**Bill Moyers**
[WATCH: Both Parties Give Invisible Americans the Silent Treatment](#)

**Dean Baker**
[Poverty: The New Growth Industry in America](#)

TOP VIDEO PICKS 1 of 8

[First Video of Snooki With Her New Baby Boy](#)

[First Look at Snooki's Baby Boy](#)

[Cocaine Reportedly Used During Prince Harry's Naked Vegas Party](#)

MOST DISCUSSED RIGHT NOW 1 of 2

[13 Movies That Changed The Way We View Poverty](#)

[Why We Aren't Playing at the RNC](#)

HOT ON FACEBOOK 1 of 3

[Madonna's Message For Americans: 'Don't Get Fat And Lazy'](#)

[WATCH: Raging Grannies Have Some Words For Todd Akin](#)

know after a few listens you'll buy both other albums and then the EPs and then start wondering when The Tallest Man On Earth will be coming to your town. Don't miss him if you get the chance. If you can hear a performance like this and not want to hear more, why then, we've got nothing to say to each other.

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of *Showbiz Sandbox*, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's [available](#) for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his [website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also [available](#) for free on iTunes. Link to him on Netflix and [gain](#) access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

Note: Michael Giltz is provided with free tickets to shows with the understanding that he will be writing a review. He also received a free copy of the album.

Follow Michael Giltz on Twitter: www.twitter.com/michaelgiltz

FOLLOW ENTERTAINMENT

Like 75k

GET ALERTS

Read more from Huffington Post bloggers:



Cliff Chenfeld: The Best Music of 2011

Just in time for the holidays, here is my 9th annual list of music that you may have missed and might like. Not as many standout releases for me in 2011 but plenty of good ones.

[More in Entertainment...](#)

Mining the Audio
Motherlode, Volume
178 --...

Guns N' Roses
Slash Once Caught
David...

Samuel L. Jackson:
'Unfair' Hurricane
Isaac AVOID...

Robin Williams As
Dwight D.
Eisenhower In...

Comments 12 Pending Comments 0

[View FAQ](#)

Comments are closed for this entry

View All

Recency | Popularity

[jjc7550](#)

HOT ON TWITTER

1 of 2



[ricky_martin](#)

Make Room for (the New) Daddy
<http://t.co/Q6eIDokm> via
[@huffingtonpost](#)

Retweet



[feliciaday](#)

Think on it: Cambridge scientists say all mammals, birds, many others including octopi, have human-like consciousness.
<http://t.co/aF6W2ZQh>

Retweet

HUFFPOST'S BIG NEWS PAGES



[Celebrity babies](#)



[Heroes](#)



[iPhone](#)



[Environment](#)



[News and Trends](#)



[Rob Shuter](#)



[James Holmes](#)



[The Kardashians](#)



[Mitt Romney](#)

[MORE BIG NEWS PAGES »](#)

0 Fans

01:10 PM on 06/27/2012

You guys are little hipsters who cannot stand people who enjoy a show. i wasnt at the show (wish i was), but whats wrong with people enjoying a show and/or trying to take pictures? Musicians fix my guitars, performers perform for an audience. Get over it, and have fun. There are plenty of artists that encourage an audience, how are people suppose to tell the difference??

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz

freelance writer

127 Fans

03:52 PM on 06/28/2012

How did you know I'm short? Anyway, every artist and every style of music and every venue has their own way of presenting and appreciating music. Just like every sporting event: you keep quiet during points at a tennis match (usually, though an "ooh" and "gasp" are fine at big moments) and you make a continuous wall of sound at American football. In the same way, you shut the hell up during classical music but are encouraged to offer a burst of applause after a solo in a jazz concert or exclamations of pleasure at a gospel show. If you're at a Bruce Springsteen concert at Madison Square Garden, everyone will clap and sing along. If you're lucky enough to see Springsteen in a tiny club doing an acoustic set chances are most everyone will be hushed and quiet during most songs. What I cannot stand are people with no consideration for anyone around them. When EVERYONE else is listening in rapt quiet maybe someone could show a little consideration for everyone around them. The schmuck at the show I saw felt obliged to shout out during virtually every quiet moment and he was the only one out of thousands doing so. As for photos, it's explicitly forbidden and security roams the aisle telling people to stop or kick them out. I just feel sorry for people who are too impatient to simply watch and enjoy a performance.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz

freelance writer

127 Fans

03:54 PM on 06/28/2012

PS How are people supposed to tell the difference? Look around you. When you're almost alone in acting a certain way at a show, chances are you shouldn't be doing whatever you're doing. If everyone is clapping and singing along, by gosh join in. If everyone is being quiet (especially DURING a song), then get clued in. It's not hard to figure out.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

jjc7550

0 Fans

08:50 PM on 06/29/2012

I agree with some of your points but come on MG. TTMOE is NOT classical music. He is indie folk, and maybe if people enjoyed his shows more often, he would have sold more albums. Ryan Adams has the resume to do such things, and he does. Kristian has a long way to go before he gets in that category. I have been to a number of acoustic, raw, shows and it's a mixed bag. Half the people love speaking out, and the other half hate it. And the other half that hate, mostly just wished they voiced themselves a bit more, they are just to shy to do so.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

jjc7550

0 Fans

09:00 PM on 06/29/2012

Furthermore, that classical music venue is filled with 40-100year olds in tuxs. TTMOE shows have 18-35year old fan base wearing shorts and t-shirts. APPEAL TO THE FANBASE!!!! You know this!

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

Jacob Crim

2 Fans

11:40 AM on 06/24/2012

when I heard "The Wild Hunt" last year it immediately became my favorite album of the year. No one is doing folk as good as Tallest Man, he has it perfected. I am so excited to see him next month.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

ennui the third
294 Fans

06:11 AM on 06/22/2012

Never heard of him and now I wish it hadn't.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

HUFFPOST BLOGGER
Michael Giltz
freelance writer
127 Fans

11:51 AM on 06/23/2012

Glad I saved you the cost of a CD!

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

ennui the third
294 Fans

03:48 PM on 06/23/2012

Wouldn't have bought this hipster junk anyway, but thanks for the thought, zippy!

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

There are More Comments on this Thread. [Click Here To See them All](#)

mdes86
0 Fans

03:43 PM on 06/21/2012

I was at this show and couldnt agree more with your summary of the absolute imbeciles in the audience.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)

[Advertise](#) | [Make HuffPost your Home Page](#) | [RSS](#) | [Careers](#) | [FAQ](#)

[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Copyright © 2012 TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. | "The Huffington Post" is a registered trademark of TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. All rights reserved.

Part of **AOL-HuffPost Entertainment**