

Preview: Huge, Grand Opera House, York, January 24 and 31

By Charles Hutchinson »

DARKNESS shrouds you when you go to work and come home, no one has any money and even the banks are skint. York needs a pick-me-up. Cue a couple of gigs on home turf by Huge at the Grand Opera House tomorrow and next Saturday night.

Big Ian of Huge

“Our job is simple: turn up and give everyone an escape from the humdrum that is January with no corners cut,” says the York party band’s singer, Big Ian.



“From the stage production and lighting to the vast nine-piece line-up, we give the audience just what they want.”

Back in 1993 Big Ian took Huge to the Opera House for a bet. “No one thought we could sell it out, but 15 sold-out shows later, and after a sell-out at the late, lamented Barbican Centre too, we’re still packing in our loyal audience from the under-fives to those almost under soil,” says Ian.

“Last year, the age range was 80 years and, like Berwick’s panto at the Theatre Royal, Huge at the Opera House has become an annual event for people all over the area.”

From cheesy swing to rock’n’roll, reggae to soul, from Amy Winehouse to ABBA, Take That to Queen, Huge handle everything with a smile on their face and tongue firmly planted in their cheek.

“The joys of such a big line-up is we can take on big ‘show-off’ tunes that smaller line-ups would be frightened of, such as Stay With Me by The Faces, The Buggles’ Video Killed The Radio Star, Michael Jackson’s Beat It and Pinball Wizard by The Who,” says Big Ian, who will be belting out northern soul favourites and Motown classics too.

In previous years, Huge have come up with surprise sketches at the beginning of the show with special guest appearances from Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, Berwick Kaler, Harry Gration and Justin Timberlake.

So, what does Big Ian have up his sleeve for tomorrow night?

“The band don’t even know... I have a DVD being sent from London, and the first time they’ll see it will be tomorrow,” he says, looking forward to seeing the reaction.

"For me, the Opera House is the pinnacle of our year. Years ago it used to be too intimidating to enjoy, but now we just love it: we get to play in our home venue and give the audience a top night out. We've been rehearsing new stuff for the shows and the band are sounding better than ever – that's the joy of having blokes who have played together a long time."

After a year when the boys have shared a stage with Ricky Tomlinson, Vic Reeves and reality TV stars Mutya Buena and Rachel Stevens, Huga are ready for 2009's new diary.

What is the secret of their success, not least as the number one draw on the university party circuit? "Not taking anything too seriously and giving people the night out I would like to have if I was in the audience," says Big Ian.