

LOBO CAME, WE SAW AND HE CONQUERED !

Ooi Eng Seng, a long-time Lobo fan, writes a concert review-cum-tribute of Lobo's recent concert in Genting Highlands. Photos by Issac Lim, Eng Hong, Andrew Lau and Eng Seng.

Lobo, you are the greatest singer
Only you can sing the way you do
Believe in your songs we really do
Oh how dear you really are to us!

Lobo (real name Roland Kent LaVoie), started off his Genting concert with the number Standing At The End Of The Line, a hit song from his Calumet album (1973). Though the song is more than 30 years old, Lobo gave the song a more up-tempo beat with his band, thus making the song more contemporary. The song tells about waiting at the end of the line for someone you really love. "Well, I'm just waiting out my time/Standing at the end of the line/I've got a lot of loving I'm saving inside for you/Yes, I'm just waiting out my time/Standing at the end of the line/But you're gonna know that you've been loved when I get through loving you" Lobo sang earnestly into the microphone in his distinct, crystal-clear voice. Great lyrics, to say the least!

The next song Lobo sang was Paul Anka's It Doesn't Matter Anymore, taken from Lobo's album entitled Asian Moon (1994). Even though I like many of Paul Anka's classic songs, I personally think Lobo does a better and smoother version of the song than Paul Anka. I realize that fans of Paul Anka may disagree with me and they are, of course, entitled to their opinion. Anyway, you should listen to both versions of the song and judge for yourself.

Next on the concert playlist was Don't Expect Me To Be Your Friend, a song Lobo said is his favourite of all his classic hits because of the mood of the song and the way it all came about in a radio interview just two days before the concert. The song, from Lobo's second album Of A Simple Man (1972), was a big hit for Lobo way back in the seventies, peaking at No. 1 on

the US Adult Contemporary Chart. (Over a short four-year period in the 1970's, Lobo made the US singles chart 14 times. Top 40 hits seemed never ending for him then.) Lobo also said that the line 'I love you too much to ever start liking you' in the chorus of the song meant a lot to him because it was a true emotion for him as he was singing the song from his heart about how hard it was to just be friends with someone whom you have had deep feelings for.

Lobo then sang Rings from his album Just A Singer (1974), an album where he covered songs by other artistes. Again I would say he sang Rings better than the original artiste. In this album, Lobo proved himself to be a very good singer indeed by tackling songs from a range of recording artistes, including Johnny Horton (All For The Love Of A Girl), Don Williams (In The Shelter Of Your Eyes) and even The Beatles (I'm Only Sleeping). He did justice to all the songs he covered in this album, I must add. The album is one of my favourite Lobo albums.

After singing Rings, Lobo went on to sing A Big Red Kite from the Of A Simple Man album. This song was not a major hit for Lobo but it is a good song with a good melody and summarizes the Taoist belief that life is like floating down a stream and you should enjoy the ride and not over-think every situation, as Lobo stated in an interview with Pop Entertainment in 2007.

Don't Tell Me Goodnight, from Lobo's A Cowboy Afraid Of Horses album (1975), was the next song in the concert. It is a very romantic song about not wanting to say goodnight to someone you love who is lying in bed next to you for obvious reasons. The next time you are in bed with the one you love, play this song on the cd player and you will agree it is one of the most romantic songs for that time of the night!

Lobo decided to change the tempo of music after Don't Tell Me Goodnight and pumped up the volume with Who'll Stop The Rain, a song originally made popular by Credence

Clearwater Revival. This was one of the ‘hotter’ songs for the night. At 67, Lobo shows he was still capable of singing soft rock and Lobo definitely rocks! For your information, Lobo had recorded some ‘hot and fast’ songs throughout his long singing career. My Momma Had Soul (from the A Cowboy Afraid Of Horses album), Back Bay (from the Asian Moon album) and At First Sight (from the Come With Me album) are three of such songs.

It Sure Took A Long, Long Time, from the Calumet album, came on next. Lobo invited the audience to “sing along if you remember this song”. I recall it went all the way up the Malaysian Top Ten charts (Radio 4) in the early 70’s, reaching the top position despite being a relatively ‘slow’ song. However, the song did not sound ‘slow’ in the concert as Lobo and his band gave it a more contemporary beat. A loyal and ardent American fan of Lobo from Cottondale, Alabama in the United States, Bobby J. Poe (a good friend of mine now) once said to me 3 years ago when we met in his hometown that it was his favourite Lobo song because it was like Lobo was singing for him and his then girl-friend Ladonna (now his wife of 36 years) during their courtship years. He was serious when he told me that it was like Lobo was hiding in the bushes behind them and looking into their relationship and writing it down in the song. The very beautiful and meaningful lyrics of the song hold special meaning for him as they reflect his early courtship years, he added.

At this point in the concert, Lobo and Billy Aerts, his right-hand man, manager, songwriter and co-writer of some of his songs, producer and co-producer of his albums, acoustic guitarist on his band (the list goes on) but, most of all, his friend of more than 35 years, let the band take a rest backstage while the both of them gave the audience an acoustic set. Lobo joked that the young men in his band needed a rest but not the old men (Billy and him). Billy, who had the audience in stitches with his jokes throughout the concert, then explained that he and Lobo

would try to take the audience's requests for Lobo songs. All they had to do was holler the songs and he and Lobo would do their best to entertain them by singing their requests. With only an acoustic guitar, Lobo continued his concert, backed by Billy, also on acoustic guitar, with his version of Universal Soldier from the Just A Singer album, a song originally written and sung by Buffy Sainte-Marie. This song sadly still reflects the situation in some war-torn countries of the world today. If you haven't heard the album/cd version of the song, you should because it is very good and quite haunting even though it is 36 years since Lobo recorded it.

For the next song in the concert, Lobo decided to feature his best friend Billy Aerts. Billy sang Reason To Believe, also recorded by Lobo in the Just A Singer album, in his own style and a bit differently from Lobo's version. Lobo accompanied him on the acoustic guitar. Billy showed the audience that he is a good singer in his own right and the audience gave him a big hand at the end of his song.

Someone in the audience shouted "Love Me For What I Am" and Lobo obliged by singing part of the song. Like the person who requested for this song, I personally like this song a lot because of the beautiful and meaningful lyrics, imploring the one you love to love you for what you are. The lyrics of the song are not only beautiful and meaningful but also quite hilarious if you pay them closer attention. Lobo writes some of his songs with a great sense of humour. Let me quote a few serious, true-to-life yet funny lines from Love Me For What I Am : I wore the clothes you liked/You said they gave me that look/I even tried to like the food/I know you like to cook.

I am sure those of us who have been in love before or is still in love has gone or is going through this phase of our love life where we not only try to please the one we love but want them to love us for what we are at the same time, as Lobo points out to us in the song!

Lobo is a singer-songwriter and pens some of the most heartfelt and romantic songs ever recorded and the song Love Me For What I Am is an excellent example of his songwriting talent. Having heard and analyzed many of his compositions, Lobo, to me, is the greatest singer-songwriter! No singer writes and sings songs, especially the love songs, like he does! He has also covered so many aspects of life in his songs – the carefree travelling days, growing pains, falling in love, love at first sight, first sexual experience, being faithful, falling out of love, holding on for dear love, breaking up, saying goodbye, walking away from it all, not spending too much of today on yesterday, being true to oneself and more. However, many are not aware of his songwriting talent as Lobo writes songs under his real name Kent LaVoie. In fact, Lobo has a few albums with entirely original compositions to his credit such as *Of A Simple Man*, *Calumet* and *A Cowboy Afraid Of Horses*.

Lobo sang *A Simple Man* taken from his second album *Of A Simple Man* (1974) next in answer to another request from the audience. They were clapping along as Lobo sang the song. This song probably describes the singer as he is – a simple man. The interesting thing about this song is the fact that every line of the song is a question, except for the four lines of the chorus. The answer to each question in the song is not as simple as we may think. Don't believe me? Well, check out the lyrics of this song (and other Lobo songs) on the www.fansoflobo.com website (click on the Lobo's Lyrics Page). The webmaster of this site Sam Vetovich is a great Lobo fan himself and he had Lobo personally declaring the multi-award winning site as the official Lobo website after Lobo had viewed it. The website has very comprehensive and up-to-date information about Lobo so if you cannot get enough of Lobo, click on the website the next time you surf the internet. Some information on Lobo in this article comes from the website. (Thanks, Sam!)

The next request from the audience was for the song Rock And Roll Days from the Calumet album. Lobo happily obliged and the song brought the audience back to the rock and roll days, back when a bust was a six-pack of cold beer. Yes, how we loved all the good old ways when we used to do things in our crowd, way back in the rock and roll days of the 70's! After the song, someone in the audience hollered "How Can I Tell Her" as the next song request. "Do you really think we're not going to do How Can I Tell Her? You mean you rather hear the two of us (Lobo and Billy) singing instead of a nice band?" Lobo mocked in jest and added "I wanna play that song!"

Next on the Acoustic Set of the concert, Lobo sang one of my two requests - You Are All I Ever Need. The song was released as a single in the United States way back in 1978. I had sent a message to Billy through Facebook about a week before the concert requesting the song and hoping that Billy would convey my request to Lobo. The song from the Best Of Lobo album (1993) was practically unheard of over the airwaves in Malaysia and I only got to hear how good it was when I bought the album. I was just lucky enough to get the only copy left of this hard-to-find album in one of the music stores in Penang in 1993. The main reason why I like this song is its very romantic chorus which goes like this: You are all I ever need/Dearer than the air I breathe/You're everything that means a thing to me/You are are all I ever need/That's what you are to me/You are love and you are life/You are all I ever need.

Well, no prizes for guessing who I would sing this song to if I were as good a singer as Lobo. Anyway, I had the singer himself - Lobo - to sing it for my wife Gim Seok, who was seated beside me in the concert. I had told my wife about the Facebook request just before the concert began and we were both on top of the world when Lobo sang an acoustic version of that song. And if you are into meaningful and romantic songs like me, check out other Lobo songs of

the same theme as You Are All I Ever Need such as I'm Glad I've Got Someone (from the Sometimes album, which, wonderfully, has been repackaged into the recent digitally re-mastered 2-Cd Special Edition The Very Best Of Lobo, currently on sale at music outlets in Malaysia), the country-flavoured You Are My Need (also on the same 2-cd Edition) and One And The Same Thing (from the Calumet album).

Daydream Believer from the Just a Singer album was next on request. For the first time in the concert, Lobo forgot a line of this song - the third line of the song. However, not wanting to give up and disappoint the fan who requested the song, Lobo immediately apologized to the audience, stayed calm, imploring the audience to give him a minute to figure out the lyrics of that song and tried again. He got the song right on the second try and the crowd applauded and cheered him on! The way I see it, Lobo should be forgiven for initially forgetting the third line of this song as the song is not originally written by him and he only sang a cover version of the John Stewart composition in his Just A Singer album some 36 years ago. In addition, it was risky for an 'old' singer like Lobo to take on requests from the audience and sing the songs requested impromptu. I salute Lobo for sportingly challenging himself to remember all the songs requested for in the Acoustic Set of the concert. It certainly was not an easy task and Lobo did admirably well for someone his age.

Well, Lobo certainly did not forget my other Facebook request. I was over the moon when Lobo took on my second request after singing Daydream Believer. It was for Faithful, another meaningful, romantic and touching song I again dedicate to my wife of 27 years. After 27 years of being married to the same woman, it was like the song was able to convey all my feelings to my dear wife. Though I feel this song was vocally challenging for Lobo at his age, he did it perfectly well with just his acoustic guitar. When his voice soared on the song, the

audience clapped appreciatively. Yes, Lobo was able to hold his own and entertain his audience with his guitar alone, minus the band. (Thanks, Lobo and Billy, for playing both my song requests!)

By the way, not many may know that Faithful is written by Billy and superbly recorded by Lobo. I told Billy in my Facebook message to him that this is, honestly, one of the most romantic and beautiful songs ever composed for married people. In my opinion, every married person, male or female, should be singing this song – in his or her mind, if not out aloud! Then there would be more happily-married couples around and the divorce rate would be greatly reduced! Suffice to say, I was well-rewarded by my wife that night high up in the mountains in Genting!

Lobo then introduced a new song to the audience - Your Heart Has Moved On - that has yet to be recorded (hopefully soon). It was a typical Lobo song, beautiful and meaningful, something in the same vein as How Can I Tell Her but maybe sadder and more haunting. Billy sang duet with Lobo on this song and both of them sang the song with so much feeling that the audience was hushed and paid rapt attention to the song they were hearing for the first time. They applauded loudly when the song ended, with a few loud, approving whistles being heard as well. I am sure it will be a hit if Lobo decides to record it.

That song ended the Acoustic Set of the concert. The band was back on the stage and ready to play after a good rest. Lobo and the band then did a medley of two songs, the mystical She Didn't Do Magic (from the Introducing Lobo album) and the hot and fun Recycle Sally (from the Of A Simple Man album), two songs which Lobo said he did not personally like but were fun to play in a live concert. And he was right as he and the band seemed to have so much fun playing the songs. The tempo was back to soft rock. In the middle of the medley, Lobo and

his band gave the audience some great guitar work and an extended play on the music. Personally, I like both the songs as they are very catchy tunes with brilliant lines and they sounded better and 'hotter' in a live concert. I wished Lobo had sung both songs separately and not as a medley but I guessed he needed to save time for his other hit songs. At the end of the medley, Lobo joked that the song Recycle Sally was his only 'green' song for the environment, stressing on the word 'recycle'! "Get it?" Lobo asked the audience, breaking into a smile.

Next on the concert playlist was Carole King's Will You Still Llove Me Tomorrow?, a song that has been covered by many singers, including the Bee Gees. I still find Lobo's version the smoothest among them. Before he sang the chorus part of the song, Lobo invited the audience to sing along if they wanted to and the audience needed no second bidding. Aided by the lyrics which were displayed on giant screens in the Arena of Stars, the audience sang heartily to the song and almost drowned Lobo's voice. I caught Lobo smiling on stage from my VIP seat as the audience sang along with him. In the radio interview, Lobo also mentioned that he, unlike other singers, loves to have his audience sing along with him in his concert, especially in a relaxed atmosphere as was in the Arena of Stars that night.

It was then time for the song that started it all for Lobo in 1971, the monster international hit Me And You And A Dog Named Boo (from the Introducing Lobo album). Lobo did the intro to the song, Country Feelings, before going into the song proper and the audience was treated to a more upbeat, extended version of the ever-so-popular song that tells about the carefree and happy days of travelling and living off the land. The interesting thing about this song that some may not be aware of is the fact that Lobo was having some difficulty finishing the title of the song. He had made up 'Me And You' but could not find a suitable ending to the title until his own dog Boo, a German Shepherd, came and just looked at him through the sliding glass door at

the end of the room. He decided there and then to complete the title of the song as Me And You And A Dog Named Boo and the rest, as they say, is history. Thus began a career that produced 20 million record sales worldwide for Lobo. It was also rumoured that a million dogs were named Boo after the song became a gigantic hit around the world.

After receiving thunderous applause for Me And You And A Dog Named Boo and thanking the audience, Lobo stopped singing and addressed them. He then briefly talked about the very painful heart attack he suffered in September, 2009. He ended his story by saying “but they (the doctors) fix me up and now I exercise. If I had done that (exercise) before, I wouldn’t have that (heart attack)! ” So here’s a quick reminder to everyone reading this: Find the time to exercise !

The next song in the concert was the very popular Stoney from his Calumet album. Even before Billy announced that he was going to find out which side of the audience had ‘the biggest lungs’ by dividing them into two groups and getting them to sing the chorus part of the song, the audience was already singing along happily with Lobo on the song. And when Billy came down to the audience from the stage to pick three individuals to sing solo on the chorus part of the song, more than 3 people were clamouring for their shot at stardom in the Arena of Stars. One ‘over-sang’ the chorus of the song but he still got a big round of applause from the 5,500 strong audience (according to Mr Issac Lim , the Marketing Executive of the Jazzy Group that brought Lobo to Genting this time round) as it was all in the name of fun. The song was so infectious that everyone in the audience was in a karaoke mood. Again I caught the smile on Lobo’s face as he watched the audience actively participating in the song. The most surprising thing about the song Stoney is the fact that it was written with the creativity of a singer-songwriter (Lobo) and was not based on any real character as Lobo revealed in the radio

interview. And to think that Lobo had many of us singing to that song for some 37 years now believing Stoney is a real person!

Next on the concert playlist was Yellow River from Lobo's Sometimes album (1996). It was a cover version of the famous Christie song of 1970 but Lobo appropriately added a verse I Long To See My Home to his recording of the song. Lobo, Billy and the band gave the audience an extended play of the song with some nifty guitar work. The song was well-received by the audience, of which a large number were from the 40-and-above age group. However, there were pocketfuls of younger people in the Arena of Stars, too, who probably grew up listening to Lobo from their parents or from the very popular Lobo Karaoke Golden Hits released as a laser disc in 1995.

I was delighted to meet up with another ardent Lobo fan BS Lee, a computer technician, from Subang Jaya who had helped me to digitalize my collection of photos, newspaper and magazine clippings of Lobo (and his wife Susie) in his heyday in the 1970's into a single compact disc. (Thanks, BS Lee!) He had watched Lobo in all three Genting concerts. I was also pleasantly surprised to be greeted by 30-year-old Andrew Lau in the Arena of Stars just before the concert started. I had introduced him to Lobo songs years ago and he told me "Thanks to you, I am here with my wife Nicole to see the man live in concert!"

Yes, Lobo's simple but unbelievably real songs touch hearts everywhere they are heard. His songs also seem to cross language and generational barriers with their meaningful and timeless lyrics that never go outdated. His songs are as relevant today as they were when he originally sang them. I personally feel that it would do the younger generation, who listens mostly to modern pop songs, a whole world of good to listen to singers like Lobo as well to achieve some sort of balance in their music appreciation. I salute a friend of mine Jan Moller

Hedelin of Denmark for listing both Lobo and heavy rock group Deep Purple as his favourites. Now that is what I call a good mixture of music!

Lobo continued his concert with 'I'd Love You To Want Me' from the *Of A Simple Man* album. This song is undoubtedly Lobo's biggest hit - it reached the No. 2 spot on the US Billboard Charts - and one that was a hit with the audience, too. Once again they sang happily along with Lobo, almost drowning his voice again. I wonder how many among the audience know that the song was originally offered to the group The Hollies (of *Long Cool Woman In A Black Dress* fame) but they did not like the line 'I felt the blood go to my feet' so Lobo decided to sing it himself and never regretted he did ! Lobo was presented with the Golden Lion of Luxemburg Award in Germany for this song in 1974, ranking him the Top Artiste Of The Year. You can catch Lobo singing this song in the 70's, as well as some of his other songs, on Youtube. Though it is a very romantic song, 'I'd Love You To Want Me' is actually about a schoolboy's crush for his Art teacher, which Lobo based on his life experience in sixth grade!

Lobo thanked the audience for coming to see him ('I love you for coming') and bade them farewell after 'I'd Love You To Want Me'. The audience, of course, would not let Lobo go that easily and started demanding for an encore. Shouts of 'Lobo! Lobo!' echoed throughout the Arena of Stars. My brother Eng Hong, who flew all the way from Kuching, Sarawak with his wife Sok Ngo for the concert, joined in by shouting 'One more song!' at the top of his voice. I believed Billy heard him loud and clear as Billy immediately called out to Lobo to come out to the stage again, saying "I think we forget one song." Of course, Lobo was keeping the song for the encore!

Lobo reappeared on stage amidst loud claps and cheers from the audience. He then playfully teased the audience "Too slow, too sad" referring to the song *How Can I Tell Her* and

added “Billy always cries.” Billy mimicked someone crying from the other part of the stage, much to the amusement of the audience. Then Lobo sang the first line of How Can I Tell Her and the audience was somewhat subdued and listened in rapt attention once again to Lobo. They could not wait any longer to sing along with Lobo and sang along with Lobo even before he hit the chorus of the song. If you were listening in, I am sure you would marvel at the sing-along with Lobo as everyone was united and singing in one voice. There and then I fully understood why they say music is a universal language!

At the end of How Can I Tell Her, Lobo again thanked his audience and bade them goodbye, saying “the old man must go to sleep.” Perhaps realizing it was really late, the audience did not ask for another encore. They were appeased and content with How Can I Tell Her and felt they had got their money’s worth with Lobo’s solid two-hour concert. It was indeed an intimate, interactive evening with Lobo for thousands of fans in the relaxed atmosphere of the Arena of Stars in Genting and Lobo has again successfully put on an unforgettable show despite getting on in age. Everyone in the audience had a good time and left the amphitheatre with a smile of contentment on their face!

For me, it was the third time I had seen Lobo live in concert. The first time was way back in 1977 when Lobo was at the peak of popularity in Malaysia. I was only 19 then and had watched his concert awe-struck from the front row. In 2006, I watched him in concert in Genting from a VIP seat and though he was 63 then, he gave the audience a very energetic and fantastic show. The third time I watched Lobo in concert was, of course, on 15th October, 2010 high up in Genting on a VIP seat once again. As a tribute to Lobo, who remains my favourite singer, here’s an acrostic poem specially composed for him:

A TRIBUTE TO THE ONE AND ONLY ROLAND KENT LAVOIE AKA LOBO

Right from Me And You And A Dog Named Boo I've been your fan
One song after another you have thrilled and entertained me
Lobo, you most certainly fill up all my senses with your songs
Always your most faithful fan I will remain till the end of time
Now and forever I shall listen to each and every song you sing
Dear to my heart you remain today and all tomorrows to come

Kent LaVoie aka Lobo, to me, you're the greatest singer-songwriter
Every song you write and sing so very well is great in its own way
Never has any singer or song-writer touched me the way you do
To listen to your great songs is what I really want to do every day

Listening to you have helped me successfully through love and life
And that is exactly what I will faithfully do as your most loyal fan
Very much in awe of you I am every time I watch you in concert
Oh, how great it was to meet you in person and shake your hand
Indeed I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart
Ever grateful to you for your wonderful songs I shall always be !

-Ooi Eng Seng

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