

ROCK OR BUST

AC/DC play Auckland's Western Springs Stadium as part of their Rock or Bust World Tour this December. Sarah Illingworth is here to tell you that yes, they've still got it and yes, you should go.

STANDING IN THE PHOTO PIT AT WEMBLEY

Stadium, waiting for AC/DC to take their opening bow, I did a slow pan of the 70,000-strong crowd. Six-year-olds on dads' shoulders; tweens looking bewildered to be wedged against the front barrier with perhaps overzealous older brothers; many, many 50-year-old men sporting AC/DC T-shirts from every era and tour. Older women, younger women, people in wheelchairs, hundreds of Brian Johnson and Angus Young dressalikes fervently perfecting their air guitar – and one rogue Gene Simmons impersonator, impeccably outfitted from head to toe.

Crowned the greatest rock 'n' roll band of all time by legendary producer Rick Rubin (Beastie Boys, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Johnny Cash), AC/DC have sold 71 million albums in America alone, making them one of the biggest acts in US music history. But while their sales are impressive, they're a band renowned for their live show, and from the first seconds of this Wembley set it was clear the five-piece can still summon a mighty wall of sound – aided in no small way by the 48 Marshall cabinets that flanked Chris Slade's drum kit.

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Classic tracks like Back in Black, Thunderstruck and Highway to Hell sparked the most visceral audience reactions of course, but newer material, including tunes from the band's most recent album, Rock or Bust, also hit the mark. Unlike some big-name acts that struggle to hold a crowd's attention between hits, all eyes and ears were on AC/DC for the whole two-hour performance.

A couple of key members may be absent from the line-up but the music doesn't suffer. Slade, the band's drummer between 1989 and '94, has returned in place of Phil Rudd, while guitarist Stevie Young covers for his uncle Malcolm, whose health issues sadly now prevent him from playing with the band he helped found. Long-time bassist Cliff Williams continues to hold strong; while, with a flick of his pitch on anthems like Hells Bells and You



Shook Me All Night Long, vocalist Brian Johnson can still easily command a primal scream from fans (including me).

And then there's Angus Young. Strutting magnificently in his trademark short-suit, Young takes Johnson's undeniable charisma and cranks it 20 volts. Truly the crackle to his band's pop, by the end of the night Young was holding court centre stage for a 10-minute solo on Let There Be Rock. Half-naked at this point and soaked with sweat, he filled the stadium with sound, flexing his credentials as one of the world's finest rock guitarists.

Pyrotechnics, confetti cannons and riffs as deeply familiar as the smell of sunscreen on a summer's day.

I don't usually go for hyperbole but I will say that until you hear thousands of voices throw up cries of "thunder!" in tidy unison, there will remain a small hole in your rock 'n' roll loving soul.

AC/DC are booked to play Auckland's Western Springs Stadium on December 15, and they're an act to see for yourself. Go on, get your tickets. And start tuning that air guitar.

**AC/DC ROCK OR BUST
WORLD TOUR**

15 December | Western Springs Stadium