

##### Ed Sheeran at the Mann Center shows why everyone likes him

##### A.D. Amorosi, *For The Inquirer*

Posted: Thursday, May 28, 2015, 3:01 AM

At 24, the cherubic, red-headed Ed Sheeran has shown dexterity as an artist and as a chart-topper, with a blend of folk and soul (occasionally tipped with hip-hop rhythms) with undeniable nods to American culture (example: his tune "The A-Team"). His affiliations further show his flexibility. He covered Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here" during the 2012 Summer Olympics. He has co-written several hits with One Direction, and he has toured with Taylor Swift. Sheeran has also worked with drum-and-bass god Goldie and weird rapper Lupe Fiasco. Altogether, these make Sheeran a goofy, lovable chap to everyone, as seen in his show Tuesday night at the Mann Center.

With an acoustic guitar (strummed hard, plucked tenderly, beaten rhythmically) and a live looping system as backing, Sheeran's tone was full and dynamic. Kudos to his sound crew for turning up the bass, giving Sheeran a bottom, and keeping proceedings rich. That groove counted most on rushing medleys like "Don't"/"Loyal"/"No Diggity"/"Nina," in which he coolly mixed and mashed his own sweetly pleading tunes with music by Chris Brown and Blackstreet. Sheeran also did a buoyant back-and-forth among his confessional "Take It Back" (the apt lyrics include "I'm not a rapper, I'm a singer with a flow"), Stevie Wonder's "Superstition." and Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine."

During that latter medley, one weakness arose in Sheeran's songwriting. Many of his hits have no real melody or chorus, and with that, his cover mashups were somewhat devoid of tunefulness, relying instead on lyrics and delivery to put them over.

Put them over he did: Sheeran was nothing if not a rouser. He got the mixed-age crowd singing along early, with the jaunty "Lego House" and the hard, fast "I'm a Mess." Watching Sheeran punkishly attack his guitar was a joy, as he wrenched new-jack funk and folk from a story of faith and ebullient romance. He pushed that sense of passionate play into ballads like the softly chaotic "Give Me Love" and "Bloodstream" - this last a growling, sexy song, with Sheeran bringing his voice down an octave and purring lines such as "I feel the chemicals burn in my bloodstream/Tell me when it kicks in." Maybe Sheeran should go places like this more often. For now, he's doing pretty good.