

I Went Down to the Crossroads



Crossroads Guitar Festival Featuring Eric Clapton (Wikipedia)



by
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Every three years, Eric Clapton holds a guitar festival and invites the best guitar players of our time, and most of his favorite legends, like Buddy Guy, Gregg Allman and Jeff Beck. This year the festival was held at Madison Square Garden in New York on April 12th and 13th and sold out in minutes. The festival raises funds for Crossroads, the treatment facility that Clapton started in Antigua.

For those of us not lucky enough to score a ticket, Fathom Events presented a one-night only event in 500 cinemas across

the country on Aug. 13th. The 2 1/2 hour film included backstage footage and a front row seat to incredible performances by some of the best musicians around. It surprised me that there were some empty seats. For only \$15.00 one could have the privilege to listen to and watch up close, some of the greatest musicians on earth. Many whom I have seen in concert alone, but never collectively. What a treat!

After the first half hour of backstage and NY street footage leading up to the concert which was beautifully shot, Mr. Clapton came out and started the show with a sweet acoustic rendition of *"Tears in Heaven"*, which he wrote for his 4 year old son who tragically fell to his death in 1991. It was a beautiful way to start the show, but from then on, the electric guitars came out and we were entertained with some outstanding blues pairings.

John Mayer and Keith Urban blew everyone away with the Beatles song, *"Don't Let Me Down"*, Jeff Beck still amazing with his young Australian bass player, Tal Wilkenfeld, doing *"Going Down"*, and Gary Clark Jr. impressing all with his talents and channeling the blues as if it was coming through his pores!

One of the most poignant numbers was Neil Young's, *"The Needle and the Damage Done"* performed by Gregg Allman, Derek Trucks and Warren Haynes. It gave me chills and was apropos since this was for the Crossroads Center. *"Midnight Rider"* was a crowd favorite and *"Why does Love Got to be so Sad"* was also a high point!



Crossroads Guitar Festival 2013

The Garden went a little nuts at one point when they realized that Eric walked out onto the stage with none other than Keith Richards. They shared *"Key to the Highway"* and *"Sweet Little Rock 'n Roller"*. Clapton also brought us back to the days of Cream with *"Sunshine of your Love."* Yes, Cream does rise to the top and this collaboration of greats at MSG was the cream of the crop!

One of my favorites was Buddy Guy featuring his protégée, our own hometown boy, 14 year old Quinn Sullivan. Quinn stepped forward during *"Damn right, I Got the Blues"*, and impressed the hell out of the crowd. It didn't matter that he was the youngest performer there. He held his own with these guitar greats and has a genuine respect and gratitude for the blues giants who inspire him. Quinn happened to be sitting in the row in front of me with his family, which added to my enjoyment of the film as we all cheered when Quinn first appeared on screen. I saw Quinn at the Zeiterion Theatre in New Bedford with Buddy Guy 2 years ago, and at that time I was so impressed with him and thought he would go far. Only 2 short years later, he is a rising star.

Other performers included Robert Cray, Vince Gill, BB King and Los Lobos to name a few. Eight hours of music had to be edited

down to 2 1/2. Not an easy task but the results were impressive. Aside from the music, there were beautiful shots of New York architecture, skylines and other interesting images.

So, for those of you who missed the concert as well as the movie, look for the DVD out this fall. Hopefully, that will include some added extras like the final jam with all the guitarists, which was not included in the movie. I will most definitely be getting the DVD, but better still, Crossroads 2016 just got added to my bucket list.