



LADYHAWKE @ YELLOW ARCH

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It's probably fair to say that Ladyhawke's career has been more eventful than most. Her 2008 self-titled debut album led to her being proclaimed as 'the next big thing in pop' by The Independent - but Ladyhawke's career didn't continue on the trajectory that many thought it would. The name of her second record - *Anxiety* - tells you all you need to know about her struggles in the subsequent years. Her output slowed, and a growing alcohol dependency almost stopped her career entirely. "I was wallowing in my own shit and I was drinking too much, and I felt so bad. I felt the worst hangover coupled with depression and aching and felt horrible. Bloated and disgusting like a pig," she would later say.

But after overcoming even more dramas in the intervening years - postnatal depression, a fatal shooting yards from her LA apartment, and a brush with cancer - Ladyhawke is finally back in the room. Tonight, she's sporting a 'VHS' baseball cap, which may well be a subtle nod to the 80s influences that have always pervaded her work. Her stage name is borrowed from a 1985 film of the same name, whilst her synth-tinged debut album (which she's playing in full tonight) instantly set her apart from her so-called 'indie landfill' contemporaries.

Even better, she finally seems happy and confident enough to revisit those bittersweet early years in full. "I've been blown away by the reaction on tour," she says in one of her rare interactions with the sold-out Yellow Arch crowd.

Set opener 'Magic' is an instant reminder that her heavyweight debut still packs a punch. Backed by insistent synths and *Stranger Things*-esque bass lines, it feels like a weight off her shoulders to be playing this record again. And it's easy to forget just how strong that early material was. 'My Delirium' has become an indie disco staple, 'Paris is Burning' rages with an irrepressible groove, whilst 'Dusk Till Dawn' is yet another earworm - of which there are many - on the record.

It may be overly simplistic to say her work is heavily influenced by the 80s, but then again, these nods to the era just keep coming. Her *pièce de résistance* on the merch stand tonight is a Ladyhawke Gameboy cartridge, which certainly tops a tote bag in my unofficial music merch rankings.

By the time ecstatic closer 'Embrace' winds down, the equally ecstatic crowd is serenading her off-stage. When you see the look of delirium on Ladyhawke's face as she exits, you can't help but feel anything but happiness for her. Let's just hope the next decade is a little more drama-free than the last.