

Concert review**NSK - wtf?**

MIK SABIERS is bamboozled by the latest offering by the Slovene industrial band that needs to cover Leonard Cohen before it hits its stridelaibach



YESTERDAY'S MEN: Milan Fras and Laibach play Shepherds Bush Empire *Photo: Mik Sabiers*

Laibach
Shepherds Bush Empire, London


NEOFASCIST figureheads, art provocateurs, industrial icons or all of the above, Laibach certainly like to question convention and expectation.

They are in London — for their only UK date — on the third leg of their Love Is Still Alive European tour.

For the first 40 minutes of the night their latest iteration is as synth-driven space-country cowboys with a slice of psychedelia thrown in.

Lead singer Milan Fras — wearing what looks like a Stetson in addition to his usual uniform — strides on stage and the opening bars of the first of what will be eight versions of Love Is Still Alive ring out in his trademark, deep, booming voice with country steel guitar in the background.

And then he vanishes and for the next 30 minutes or so we're taken on a musical ride that at times harks back to early 1980s synth a la Depeche Mode, before shifting into more of a Suicide or Sigue Sigue Sputnik groove, and then even some Oxygene-era Jean Michel Jarre.

Received more with due deference than delight it's all a bit Blade Runner-esque, but doesn't quite gel, and the gig was missing Fras who only returns some 20 minutes later for the final variation of the song before an intermission.

Then comes a section titled War, playing tracks from Laibach's back catalogue. It is sombre and serious, but lacking elan.

The light show and imagery on the backdrop do keep eyes entertained, and the more mainstream industrial goth rock of Lepo — Krasno or Smrt Za Smrt gets the audience more animated, but it still seems strangely subdued.

It's only in the encore that things hit their stride. There's a superb cover of Leonard Cohen's The Future as well as Laibach's inspired industrial interpretation of Sympathy for the Devil, before the show sweetly comes to an end with the band's latest track, love song The Engine of Survival written by collaborator and backing singer Donna Marina Martensson.

This all rescues the show which while sometimes indulgent and repetitive, has unexpected delights.

Neither political rally nor pop concert, Laibach did what they wanted to do, leaving it down to the audience to interpret and enjoy, or otherwise.

Touring Europe throughout November, details: laibach.org