

# Richard Marx interview

It's been nearly 40 years since Richard Marx broke through with his hit single Don't Mean Nothing. Since then the Chicago-born singer-songwriter has sold over 30 million albums worldwide, breaking records as the only male artist in history to have his first seven singles reach the US Top Five. Earlier this year he released his 14th studio album, After Hours, a record that blended Great American Songbook standards with new originals written in the same era-evoking spirit. This week, Marx brings the After Hours tour to the London Palladium, playing two nights at the iconic venue.

## **What can fans expect from these Palladium shows?**

These shows are going to be really fun because I can vary them up a bit. The great dilemma every time I do a show is putting a set list together, because I do have a bunch of songs that I have to do. I'm happy to do them because I wrote them, and I'm certainly not sick of them. I don't subscribe to this 'don't play the hits' thing. There's been this trend for a while now, where artists don't really want to play their hits, and I don't understand it.

I've noticed over the years my audiences are really open to hearing new stuff, you just have to pace it properly. I'm very conscious of the balance between making sure that the audience gets everything that they showed up to get, but also having a couple of moments of like, "Oh, I've never heard that song, I //love// that song!" Peppering in some tracks from the new album on this particular tour is actually the easiest segue because they're old standards. The audience is hearing me sing a song that they know, they've just never heard me sing it.

## **Are you excited about playing the London Palladium?**

It's so historic. I've never played there, or even been there. We played the Albert Hall two years ago and remember walking off that particular stage and saying to my wife, "I think this was my favourite show of my whole career." And I said that about another London show prior to that. So playing in London, those have been the highlights of my life.

## **Your latest album has you singing classics like Love Is Here To Stay and Fly Me To The Moon, alongside new compositions. Have you ever thought about giving your hits a Sinatra-style makeover?**

I thought about that, but if I took Right Here Waiting or Don't Mean Nothing and gave it that treatment, there would definitely be a few people in the audience who would go, "That's cool! I never would have pictured that song that way" but the majority would feel really ripped off that they came to hear Right Here Waiting and were like "Why did he do it like that?" So it's risky. I get it because I would be the same way. When I go see an artist, I don't want them to change it too much, I want to hear what I know that I love.

## **You recorded the After Hours album itself live, didn't you, with a 24-piece band. Was that nerve-wracking?**

Oh yeah, because if I flub something, if I don't sing a great take, the violinist is going to look over and go, "You asshole! We've got to do it again because Richard screwed up!" So yes, the pressure was on. It was one of the only times I've ever been in my car driving to the studio and been nervous about recording.

**Before a big gig like the Palladium, do you have a health regimen, to make sure you and your voice are at peak performance?**

I'm very health conscious. I'm 63 now and I want to be in shape to live as long as I can. I've been vegetarian or pescatarian, one of the two, for most of my adult life. My only vice is a martini.

**You've been doing this for 40 years. Do you still get nervous before shows?**

I never ever get nervous, I just can't wait to play. To me, going on stage is so relaxing - it's my favourite thing. I'm more in love with what I do than I've ever been. I have friends that might come to a show, and they'll be backstage with me and, if the show's at 7.30, it'll be 7.25, and they'll say, "Don't you need to get ready?" and I'll go, "No, I'm fine." I can be in the middle of a story, and my tour manager says, "Okay, showtime!" and I go, "Ah, I'll tell you later!" and I walk on stage and we start the show. I don't warm up.

**Are you thinking about the next album yet? Do you think you'll continue in this jazz vein for a while?**

I have a small team of people who I work with and they all want me to do After Hours 2. They want me to jump right back into it because it was successful, and I'm like, I just did that! What's been coming out of me now as a songwriter have been songs that sound '70s pop and rock, so I think that's what I'm going to do. The songs that have been just flowing out of me have been reminiscent of Jackson Brown and the Eagles and Linda Ronstadt and Carly Simon. I'm going okay, well, if that's what's in my soul right now, let's go with that. So unless I switch gears suddenly, I think that whatever the next album is, sometime in 2027, it'll be something like that.