



SURPRISE CONCERT: Rapper T-Pain entertains the audience

T-Pain – US Naval Base

THE kingdom's music lovers were treated to a surprise concert by a Grammy award-winning rapper and record producer at the US Naval Base in Juffair.

When word spread like wildfire that the singer, songwriter and actor, Faheem Najm, better known by his stage name T-Pain, was going to be serenading servicemen, women, families and friends on the island, music-lovers were ecstatic ... including this reviewer who has been a devoted fan of the Nappy Boy Entertainment record label founder since his hot hit *Sprung* in 2005.

He did not disappoint with a fast-moving set which included funky hip-hop track *Church* and inspirational *All of the Above*, a rendition with fellow rapper, Maino. The list of popular songs is vast as it appears anything T-Pain has collaborated on, or touched, has turned to gold.

He lit up the stage with his performance. A small stage was set up in the courtyard close to a food court surrounded by picnic tables and benches for people to sit and enjoy the show. I'm not sure why there were chairs because, as soon as T-Pain and his entourage hit the stage, everyone was on their feet, snapping their fingers and bopping to the beats.

It may not have been the best set-up with the fanciest lights or effects, but this concert had something that many others lack ... energy and heart in abundance.

T-Pain danced up a storm, interacted with the audience and hit all the right notes. It was an intimate affair as fans managed to get up close to the star, yell out requests and laugh at his humorous antics.

He sang many crowd favourites including hits *All I Do Is Win*, *5 O'Clock*, *Snap Yo Fingers*, *Buy You a Drank* and his latest single *Up Down*. It was a one-hour mash-up of T-Pain's greatest hits.

We sang along, waved our hands in the air and cheered at his live free-style mixing.

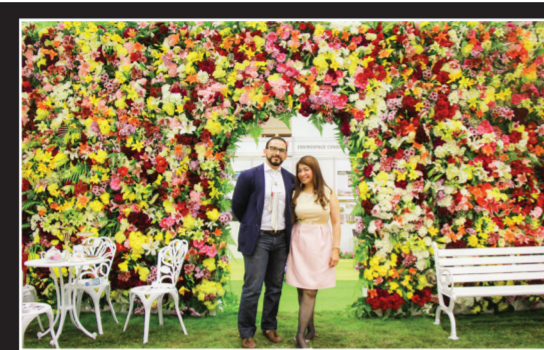
When he stopped for a water break and shared his exhaustion with the crowd we laughed.

And, when he left the stage the first time round and came back for an encore we shrieked in delight.

When the show was over, many stayed around talking about how great the show was and were rewarded for their dedication. The show organisers invited fans to queue up for autographs and pictures, the courtyard magically emptied and people lined up for up to an hour to get a chance to shake hands with the entertainer.

An amazing event and the best Monday ever!
– Mai Al Khatib-Camille

A vista of gorgeous greenery



BLOOMING BLOSSOMS: Artistic creations from a vibrant garden on show at the Exhibition Centre

Photographs: Ryan Bayona

EVERYTHING was rosy in the garden at the Bahrain International Garden Show as it enchanted and educated visitors at the Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Centre in Sanabis.

This particular show definitely called my name, as my name literally means 'blossom' in Arabic. Upon entering, visitors must have felt they were stepping into their own secret garden with all the gorgeous greenery on display surrounded by the most fantastic floral scents.

Featuring more than 145 organisations, including 12 farmers from the popular weekly Saturday Farmer's Market at the Agriculture Centre in Budaiya, the show highlighted a vibrant selection of fresh flowers and vegetables, delightful décor as well as technology, training workshops and opportunities available in the agricultural sector.

COMMUNITY REPORT
By NAWAAR FAROOQ
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This year's theme was 'Agricultural Training for a Sustainable Harvest', and the show attracted experts, exporters and agro-preneurs from across the globe under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad, with support of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of His Majesty and president of the National Initiative for Agricultural Development.

The first botanical baubles that caught the eye were an amazing assortment of magical mini-terrariums displayed by Hejair Gardening and Landscaping. The clear globes included a small, colourful figurine that highlighted Chinese culture and could be hung from another plant, almost like Christmas tree ornaments. Mercy Garcia, 32, from Adliya,

explained the meaning behind the artistry. "These items are new and feature a small bonsai plant with a lucky charm to commemorate the Chinese New Year. We are trying to adapt some nice concepts from Asian countries," she said.

After a stroke of good luck from these cute Chinese creations, a bright wall of blossoms at Astra Flowers – which is headquartered in Saudi Arabia and is a subsidiary of Arab Supply and Trading Company – proved mesmerising.

Joined by a beautiful Brunette mannequin dolled up in a gown of roses, visitors were able to sit in the patio area and enjoyed fancy and delicious chocolates amid soft French music with Ala Jasser, who works in national flower sales for the company. Photographer, Ryan Bayona, loved the backdrop so much that it turned into an editorial photo shoot rather quickly.

Mr Jasser, a 37-year-old Jordanian native who currently lives in Saudi

Arabia, said: "There's a lot of buzz and it's exciting to watch people come here and take pictures."

"People might think that flower production from Saudi is low-quality compared to other markets, but we wanted to show everyone that we produce excellent quality."

There was no doubting that, as the 'scent-sational' pure white Casablanca and graceful pink Stargazer lilies spellbound the crowd with their splendour. The fresh lilies, which are produced in specifically-designed greenhouses and glasshouses that meet the highest standards of technology, make up 11.8 per cent of the 28,000,000 flowers that are cut and produced annually.

While flowers and plants are nature's own artistic creations,

it's great when man can lend a hand to add a sense of style.

Bahraini-based store, Details, offered fresh and modern masterpieces in their collections, whether it was with the addition of fun chairs and loungers or colourful and inventive pottery pieces.

Wahid Halabi, the 43-year old managing director of Details and Budaiya resident, said: "We are here for the second time and work with brands and furniture that have a story to tell. We come to this exhibition because we are passionate about it."

After a taste of modern art, there was a chance to step into the wild side. While passing through the softly-scented corridor with romantic twinkling lanterns on display above our heads, it felt like we were

stepping into the jungle. There were majestically-crafted life-size displays of elephants, horses and wildcats, as well as fountains that resembled natural cascades. The CD that played sounds of wild birds and trickling water created the ambiance of a serene paradise.

The trek through the wilderness provoked hunger pains and although the vegetables and fruits were enticing with their vibrant colours and tantalising textures, there was more eye candy, in more ways than one, within close distance.

Amina Alsherooqi, the 30-year-old executive manager of La Marquise Chocolates & Floral Art, Charming Receptions and Sherfat Fairouz shared an adorable boutique stall. Even though space was limited, the

floral arrangements and soft lighting had the atmosphere of a swanky café and it proved the ideal location to sip on hot coffee and try the cute and tasty canapés and Turkish sweets.

"I started with a flower shop, and then added the touch of hospitality and hot drinks. The combination of the three works well for weddings, corporate events and celebrations," said Ms Alsherooqi.

What was great about this kind of exhibition is that it showcased many agricultural, artistic and technological possibilities that can grow from a single garden. Not only did it provide a great learning experience, with the variety of workshops and information that was offered, but also a visual journey that awoke all of the senses.



DELIGHTFUL CREATION: From left, Sowsan Hasan (with Gruffalo hand puppet), Ruqaya Aamer (mouse) and Kanwal Hameed

The Gruffalo – Ruqaya Aamer, Sowsan Hassan and Kanwal Habeeb – Words Bookstore & Café

THERE was an air of quiet expectancy at the popular Palm Square venue on Budaiya Highway.

The TV reporter and the cameraman were in place, the actors were doing some last-second rehearsing; my grandson was munching his way happily through a bag of popcorn. All was quiet, when suddenly the door was flung open and the rest of the young audience rushed in.

Places were quickly found on the floor cushions, last minute adjustments made and with the magic seemingly switched on; the audience was soon lost in the world of *The Gruffalo*.

Using only hat and shadow puppets with a small screen to throw the shadows onto, Ruqaya Aamer and Sowsan Hassan along with Kanwal Hameed as the narrator and shadow puppet master, created a delightful world of story for the children to enter and allow their imaginations to run free.

The Gruffalo is the very interesting little tale of a small creature overcoming his enemies with his power of thought and persuasion. The kicker is the twist in the conclusion; which if you do not yet know the story, I will not spoil the fun by telling you.

Like all good stories it carries an educational element. The acting was flawless, as we have come to expect from these talented young ladies. They bring the art of story-telling to a whole new level in Bahrain and deserve to be successful in reaching a far wider audience.

Sadly, it was all over too quickly and the thoroughly entertained audience stood up to go; still wrapped in a world where a little mouse could trounce everyone he came up against ... a wonderful life lesson to carry home.

I shall be watching my inbox intently waiting for their next adventure into the world of acting and story-telling.

– Christine Hasan

