

A spine-tingling night that proves it's all right now...

Review

Paul Rodgers, Deborah Bonham and special guests

Racehorse Sanctuary fundraiser, The Venue, Chichester

Deborah Bonham admitted she really couldn't quite believe it when she introduced him. Even now, it doesn't quite ring true.

But yes, it really did happen. Paul Rodgers, the man who gave us Free and Bad Company, played Chichester on Saturday night. And – no surprise in this – he brought the house down.

With all the skills of his years in the business, Rodgers delivered a stunning set which underlined exactly why he's arguably the greatest rock and blues singer we've ever produced.

Others come close, but while others of his vintage have faded just a touch, Rodgers has continued to grow. And on Saturday night, he once again married consummate

artistry with the joy of performance to produce a session which will be remembered for years to come.

Classics including *Walk In My Shadow*, *Ride On A Pony*, *Fire And Water* and *My Brother Jake* were among the delights in a Free-heavy set. *Wishing Well* was sublime, and *All Right Now* was one of those spine-tingling moments which suggest that no other live entertainment can ever truly come close to music at its very best.

Just as impressive was the fact that backing him was the Deborah Bonham Band who'd earlier backed Deborah through her own superb set – just one of the many elements in a four-hour slice of musical heaven in aid of Deborah's beloved racehorse sanctuary (www.racehorsesanctuary.org).

Opening the night was Chichester Music Academy

youngsters Room 4 with an assured version of *Teenage Kicks* – a great performance given that none of them are teenagers yet.

Closing the night were terrific, contrasting sets from Paul Rodgers' daughter Jasmine and son Steve. And in between, auction and raffle contributed generously to the cause.

Everyone played their part, but all would concede it was Rodgers who took it to the highest level.

And what bliss it was to catch him up close and personal in a setting far more intimate than he'd usually play.

Those of us privileged enough to have been at The Venue on Saturday will grow increasingly smug with passing time. We were there, and that's all that mattered. *It's All Right Now* and for a very long time to come.



PHIL HEWITT Paul Rodgers and friends provided a night to remember