

# Paul Anka

★★★★★ Royal Albert Hall, London

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If you weren't aware that Paul Anka is on first-name terms with popular music royalty before this show, you certainly were by the end. When he wasn't showing black-and-white footage of himself as a bequipped 1960s teen idol with the Beatles and Sinatra, he was reminiscing about touring with "my friend Chuck Berry" or writing It Doesn't Matter Any More for "my friend Buddy Holly". Tom Jones also got a look-in, as did Bill Clinton: "He told me he used to make out to my records." The namedropping would have been tragic if the man weren't responsible for a dozen or so solid-gold pop classics that give him every right to strut.



Vegas style ... Paul Anka at the Albert Hall. Photograph: Joel Ryan/PA

The definition of the word "prodigy", Anka was writing hits at the age of 16, and those he didn't perform himself he bestowed on his friends Buddy, Frankie (My Way) and Tom (She's a Lady). Then there are the ones Clinton smooched to: Diana, You are My Destiny, Put Your Head on My Shoulder. The royalties will make a tidy addition to the pension he'll be collecting when he turns 65 this year.

What brought him over for his first London show in years wasn't just the memories; he was also capitalising on his recent covers album, Rock Swings, a collection of pop and grunge hits translated into a jazz idiom. A top 10 success last year, it's the first Anka album ever to chart in this country, amazingly enough. It's hard to work out who actually bought it, though; this crowd was clearly flummoxed by introductions like "This is by Nirvana! Everybody stand up!" and "A song you'll either love or hate - it's REM!" To his and the songs' credit, Smells Like Teen Spirit and Everybody Hurts adapted stylishly to a Vegas-style context. Put to the test here, they slipped in alongside his old standards without disturbing the crease in his slacks. With a few corny jokes thrown in for free, he provided one of the most entertaining evenings of the year.