

Gavin Friday review: Soaring falsetto and Virgin Prunes' revivals make for a fine night

Gavin Friday's gig at Vicar Street reminded us of his status as a master showman



Gavin Friday at Vicar Street in Dublin.

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PAT CARTY



Gavin Friday, Vicar Street, Dublin, ★★★★★

Stay with me here but when Nietzsche used the phrase 'Ecce Homo' to name his final book, the subtitle, roughly translated, was "How One Becomes What One Is". Gavin Friday, not previously renowned for looking over his shoulder, released a fine album last year also called *Ecce Homo*. It tells of how he became who he is. Behold the man.

Accordingly, his show in Vicar Street, part of a mini tour that has him treading the boards "in his own shoes" for the first time in over a decade, documented the life and times of the Man Friday.

He gave us the whole shebang, from the sturmtruppler glam stomp of *Lady Esquire*, which recalls getting high as a young lad in Ballymun and has the chutzpah to quote Gary Glitter's *Rock And Roll* in 2025, to the stately panegyric to "the boys from number 140, number 10, and number 5" – himself, Bono, and Guggi – *When The World Was Young* with a keyboard line that would have Kraftwerk cracking a smile.



Gavin Friday recently released a new album, *Ecce Homo*.

He sang to his mother, his partner, even his dogs, exploring his present and his past. One of the most striking sections of an evening that repeatedly hit you over the head was the excavation of the Virgin Prunes' *Sandpaper Lullaby* and *Caucasian Walk*. The latter had Friday speaking in tongues and babbling like a loon while the demon dance music grew more insistent, pulling back the curtain on a dark place.

Once that was off his chest and exorcised from his soul, there was the gleeful Bolan boogie of *King Of Trash* and the encore's gorgeous *Angel*. Friday worried his falsetto wouldn't hold up at 65 but it soared as the mirror ball's refraction bathed us in warm gauze.

The use of light, from glaring white spots to laser gloves, and screen projections like the dancing Ballymun Towers was superb, as were his phenomenal band, who veered from near cacophony to delicate fragility, often within the same song, with Renaud Pion's electronic wind manipulation warranting special mention.

But it was Friday's night. He told stories about everything from kissing the telly when T. Rex were on *Top Of The Pops* to exploring 1980s' Soho, evoked everyone from Kurt Weill to Scott Walker, and looked fantastic while doing it. The glitter on his shaved head was camper than the back room in O'Meara's but it's a look every follicly-challenged individual should immediately adopt.

"Give me a bentwood chair, a bulb, a cigarette and a microphone and that's theatre," Friday told me years ago with a straight face. Tonight certainly was that. A triumph.