

When I learned Gaslight Anthem was hitting up Brooklyn Bowl, I couldn't wait. This combination bowling alley/pub/music club is fast becoming my new favorite venue. It's got a cozy, laid back neighborhood vibe that I don't quite feel at the other music halls I normally frequent. Plus, who doesn't love ample, free street parking?

Friday night was Gaslight Anthem's second appearance in two nights within the 5 Boroughs. They played Manhattan's Terminal 5 on Thursday night, a show I was originally considering going to. But between T5's 3,000 capacity multi-level night club and the Bowl's small 600-capacity, which would you go to? The choice was clear. Nothing beats an intimate gig, especially when it's a (semi) hometown show for a great up-and-coming band like this one.

Gaslight Anthem hails from New Brunswick, New Jersey, a town within an hour of the birthplace of another Jersey native that might sound familiar to you, Bruce Springsteen. From boyishly handsome lead singer Brian Fallon's gritty, soulful vocal style to the small town imagery and cast of characters the band sings about, it's obvious Springsteen is a huge influence on this band.

They don't rip off The Boss by any means, but they are definitely from the School of Bruce. The direct Springsteen lyrical references in "Meet Me By The River's Edge" (to "No Surrender", "Bobby Jean", and "The River") and "High Lonesome" (to Bruce's steamy 1985 hit "I'm On Fire") make it obvious they've been listening to his records all their lives. And if the look of heaven on Fallon's face during Springsteen's jam on "59 Sound" at this year's Hard Rock Calling concert in London's Hyde Park doesn't convince you, I don't know what will. In fact, Friday night that grin lit up the Bowl's small stage quite a few times, making it obvious that the foursome (rounded out by drummer Benny Horowitz, bassist Alex Levine, and guitarist Alex Rosamilia) were having a great time Friday night as well.

As soon as Gaslight Anthem walked out on stage, the floor filled up with everyone who'd previously been getting loaded on Brooklyn brewed beer at the back bar, while opening acts Broadway Calls, Jesse Malin, and Murder By Death played. They opened the show with "High Lonesome" which got the crowd rocking right away. The set, which lasted til just around midnight, also included songs such as "Great Expectations", "Film Noir", The Cure-riff-ic "Old White Lincoln", "59 Sound", "The Patient Ferris Wheel", "We Came to Dance", "Blue Jeans & White T-Shirts", and, as a result of a fan request, a spontaneous cover of Pearl Jam's "State of Love And Trust." I think that might actually be the first time I've seen a band honor a crowd member's song demand. The highlight for me was the sweet "Here's Looking At You Kid", a song in which the narrator reminisces over the heartbreakers of his past while currently living the life of a famous rock and roll star. Naturally, the crowd went nuts for the line "I heard she lives in Brooklyn with the cool."

What I expected to experience that night was a solid rock show and a chance to put my dancing shoes to good use. What I didn't expect was the rowdiness that ensued. There was a full on circle pit, a lightning quick stage dive and at least one fight. A few girls even made a quick visit to the stage and got a few seconds of boogie time in before security whisked them off. I never imagined that Gaslight Anthem's Americana jukebox rock would inspire the same craziness as a punk show. But that's what good music, good beer, and a great venue will inspire- an all out chaotic good time.