

Live Review: Hope and Social

By [Callum Reilly](#)

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After a stomping set from Louise Petit's acoustic outfit, the ever-eclectic Hope & Social make their way onto the tight stage confident that a crisis has been avoided: each of their trademark blue blazers are indeed accounted for. As each member dons said blazers in preparation for a set of heroic proportions on this last night of the tour, I begin to wonder how a band with such a stage presence might actually perform.

After all, Hope & Social's albums defy pigeonholing, with soul (à la Dexys), folk (via Dylan and Springsteen) and 70s stage rock amongst their many influences which can, sometimes, make for a surprising listen. Yet, history has shown the Leeds eight-piece are in their element performing, having been dubbed one of the top live acts in the country.

By their third song 'Family Man', the hammering of a Rhodes piano, crashing drum fills and triumphant fanfares show how easily their enthusiasm ties the sound together. The music is diverse, uninhibited, and awash with whoa-ohs, but certainly lives up to their Yorkshire E-Street Band tag: meaty, beaty, big and... brassy. A cover of '500 Miles' also portrays a humorous side to the band, only making the crowd more appreciative.

But it was Simon Wainwright, the frontman's response to a technical hitch that proved to be the defining moment of the gig. Having clawed his way to the middle of the crowd armed only with an acoustic guitar and the voices of scores of devoted fans, his intimate rendition of 'Looking for Answers' showed how little their current lack of mainstream following matters. In only a few short years, they have clearly mustered a truly dedicated fanbase.

With the last banjo strum of the Mumford-esque 'A Darkness Now is Coming', the sincerest cheers from the audience show this band is far bigger than its numerous members, which alone is reason enough to see Hope & Social live. With anxiety over how the band's diverse sound would be reflected live defiantly stamped out, only one question remained: where exactly do they get those blazers dry-cleaned?



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