



They Might Be Giants. Picture: AK Photography

FESTIVAL

## Adelaide Festival 2019 review: They Might Be Giants

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### An Evening with They Might Be Giants

Contemporary Music / United States

The Palais, Riverbank, Elder Park

March 3

If you are a member of Gen X and you couldn't find a reason to go out on Sunday night then it might be time to simply admit that you've become couch-bound.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers rocked thousands of fans at the Super Loop, Madchester legends Happy Mondays shuffled and grinned through HQ, and electronic luminaries Orbital and Severed Heads shook up the RCC.

And over on the mighty River Torrens, atop the now-condemned floating Palais stage, New York art rockers They Might Be Giants took a packed house on a two-hour journey through their almost 40 year-long career.

It was a night of story and song — the banter between dual frontmen John Linnell and John Flansburgh was both warm and hilarious — and the overwhelmingly bespectacled crowd lapped it up.

While the two Johns started as a duo backed by a drum machine, they've been playing with a band since the early nineties, and what a band it is.

They are incredibly tight and completely on point, moving as a single unit throughout the night.

Special mention must go to trumpet player Mark Pender who jumped off stage and played in the crowd, and at one point delivered a minute-long single-note solo, thanks to circular breathing and sheer willpower.



Mic check ... the crowd lapped up the fabulous weirdness of They Might Be Giants.

TMBG are a celebration of nerdiness all wrapped up in hooks that, once embedded, can never be removed.

Many bands have asked questions like *Why Does The Sun Shine*, but few have answered with, "The sun is mass of incandescent gas, a gigantic nuclear furnace, Where hydrogen is built into helium at a temperature of millions of degrees," and still made people want to dance.

The new tracks were warmly received, but it was the classics that really got the crowd jumping (or at least enthusiastically bobbing — knees older than 40 years often don't respond well to jumping).

*Istanbul (Not Constantinople)* transforms the Palais into some kind arts grant-funded pirate ship, *Don't Let's Start* is a revelation and *Birdhouse In Your Soul* is still a song that's guaranteed to make even the grumpiest of gig-goers grin.

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The last song is, of course, *Doctor Worm* — perhaps the closest thing they have to a smash hit (if you don't count the theme song to *Malcolm in the Middle*).

The lights came up and hundreds of happy fans were disgorged into the night — only to find they couldn't sleep because they had They Might Be Giants hooks on repeat in the stereo of the brain. An excellent evening indeed.

— Nathan Davies

