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shopping mall,

the shape of the world itself). slope with real snow, the enor-

Maiden played the rock festival, town, you soon discover, is an men, barely got out of first gear. peractive toddlers must gaze and now the poppier Desert developers at late notice. But if the reason was typical of Dubai's pell-mell development, then its effect has been to locate the now AS Mika bounced annual festival somewhere that could not be more apt.

Talking of apt, the headliner of the first night amid the navihe was like a whose band mostly comprised a 13-piece string and horn sective women, in gorgeous silver gowns, who sawed and blew away E-numbers even when the music had no

was *so* Dubai.

ing three palm-shaped arrange-flashed red lining as he pumped surrounding cluster of vertigithe set to free herself and, espements of islands and another in and punched and flailed, his huge nous concrete, and neither cially, her wonderful band. gold teddy-bear pendant the seemed to belong here anyway: Everywhere you look there's brightest thing on the outdoor Marley because the lack of any latest luxury-brand togs, it was a price-tag-is-everything atti- stage, he certainly wasn't in town odour of ganja during his set was plain that the audience was maintude. One Chrysler Building? Pah just to make up the numbers - overpowering (a sign at the air- ly there for the teenybop sensa-- there are two look-alikes going whether on the concert's bill or port announces that possession tion Mika. He is almost the exact up next to each other. Its new air- his own. His one-and-a-half-hour of drugs is punishable by death), antithesis of West - white where port will be bigger than Cardiff. set in the 26C heat of late evening and Madness because they sing the latter is black, light where Not Cardiff airport - Cardiff. And was a masterpiece of pacing. The of English rain and domesticity. West is dark, and bright and trethen there's the huge indoor ski- pounding first two-thirds were mous baroque-cum-neoclassi- even gothic: "Touch the Sky", began the business end of day to not only thrilled the crowd but cal waterfront project... It seems "Diamonds", and "Gold Digger" two. The first half of her set was also threatened to knock out the a developer only has to want to all overwhelming. "What do you mostly drawn from her latest swathes of plate glass in the build something even more out- want?" he demanded during album, Introducing Joss Stone, a surrounding towers. As he landish than the last for it to be- "Gold Digger", and the crowd, in series of unconvincing, smooth, bounced around the stage, clad And culture is what Dubai no finery, screamed back, as one, which her top-notch band, with TV presenter on a diet of indus-

irony-free zone. Rhythm Festival has hit town Around the hour mark he be- was when she announced, in a after expanding from last year's came quiet and personal. "Every-voice wobbling unsurely back the lake by the CNN, Reuters, ity ("I'm living the Dubai-type the D&G sickbag... and Middle East Broadcasting dream") to a show-stopping cli-Earlier in the day, Ziggy to watch them

gation light-winking skyscrap-Wort a man kids' TV presenter on a diet of tion featuring fabulously attrac-industrial-strength

The most toe-curling moment upon him in awe.

the 20-year-old Stone is patent- with a... man!"

can afford the very best. as she did, with Eric Baker's exhibitionist inhabitants.

ubai is bling apparent string or horn compo- Marley had ignored local organ- fatback guitar particularly hot. city: it has the nent. The harpist was a particities requests not to sing The penultimate "Tell Me About world's tallest ularly forlorn figure, only occa- "Shalom" in a set whose high It" was a tour de force, where building (the sionally called upon to pluck a points were jolly readings of his each band member took stun-Burj Dubai), few chords, but perched high and father's hits, and Madness had ning solos. By the time Stone finthe largest looking impossibly alluring: she put in a tired but expat-pleasing ished with a breathlessly soulful greatest-hits set. Both were "Leave Me Alone", no one was Musical bling aside, West was entertaining, but as much in the happy to acquiesce. It was just a tremendous. In a black suit that shadow of past glories as of the shame that it took her so long in

Aside from showing off their After a performance by the bly where the rapper is low and irresistibly epic, string-laden, Euro-Iranian Arash, Joss Stone throbbing Mika's nuclear falset

His songs are pure Eurovision with candy-stripes through them single day to two days of pop. It thing I'm not, made everything and forth across the Atlantic, of Freddie Mercury, Robbie took place over the weekend in I am," he intoned, building that she had finally found her Williams and Elton John. He did a shallow grassy bowl in front of through references to the local-true love, and it was music. Pass the hit album Life in Cartoon Motion, of course, with a couple of Stone asked if Dubai was dig-new songs, and the crowd-of all buildings of Dubai's Media Cen-max of "I'm the MAN!". Except ging her, and the 15,000 priviages, it must be said, but chiefly tre. The location was forced upon that the show didn't stop: he releged locals and expats in attenin their teens and early twenties the organisers when last year's turned, in a neon-seamed jack-dance sounded a little unsure. - absolutely adored it, even helpout-of-town venue was sold to et, for a crunching "Stronger". Dubai doesn't buy in huge acts ing him out of a little local diffimoments of self-discovery that the line, "Billy Brown fell in love

ly experiencing, after the first He and his band encored – in flush of her success. No: Dubai furry animal costumes, no less wants what it can afford, and it - with "Lollipop", and balloons, glitter and streamers cascaded Stone belatedly complied. into the cheering, dancing, mass With perhaps unconscious as their squeaky hero bounced candour, she said: "I want to tell out of view in his now off-theyou something real and honest," shoulder alligator get-up.

and found some passion as she Dubai is the biggest, boldest, delivered "You Had Me", her sig-brashest upstart place in the nature tirade against an old world, and Mika was made for boyfriend. The band found fire both for it and its unashamedly



come reality in next to no time. their Gucci, Chanel, and Moschislick and indulgent tunes, in indental white, he was like a kids' Pop pickers: stars wowing the young Dubai crowd included (clockwise from far left) Mika; Kanye West; Ziggy Marley; wants now. Earlier this year, Iron "We want greenbacks!" Boom- its former James Brown side- trial-strength E-numbers. Hy- Suggs of Madness; and Joss Stone NOUSHA SALIMI/AP, REUTERS

