

**NSSN**  
**ORACLE ARENA**  
**DECEMBER 11, 2009**



**WE WILL BE VICTORIOUS - LIVE 105 NSSN CONCERT**

Fighting illness and weather, we sent a couple of folks over to the annual Live 105 Not So Silent Night in what appears to be a family tradition.

We have had representation at every NSSN, save one year, since the local radio station at 105.3 on the FM dial ran the Green Xmas acoustic series, starting off with David Byrne. Which was about thirty years ago, putting our Live 105 in-house Activist at more shows for more years than DJ Jared has been alive.

Hoo boy.

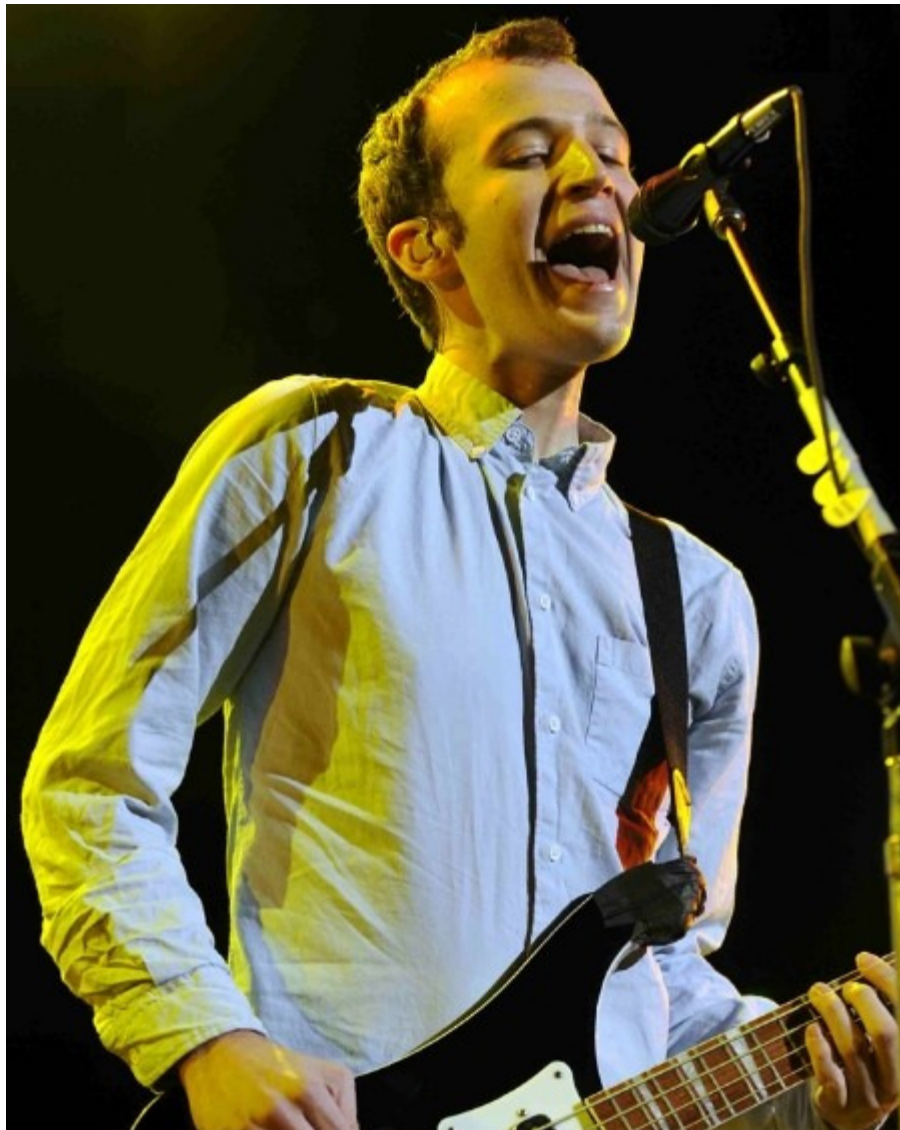
The show typically features the best and the brightest from the Alternative end of the music, with the most recent years featuring a lot of heavily-inked thrash punk, post-punk, post-grunge stuff heavy on the bass/drum/guitar

setup. Death Cab for Cutie made an appearance one year, so its not all thump-thump set to ten on the gain dial. The multi-band shows typically sell out within a day of ticket announcement and this year was no exception.

The usually dour and unexcited Jim Harrington (Contra Costa Times) waxed effusive about this year's presentation, which ought to tell you something. Showed up late (show begins at 6:00pm and ends past midnight) so we missed the local band opener and Metric. Came in during Vampire Weekend's energizing set.



According to the Presskit, Ezra Koenig, Chris Baio, Rostam Batmanglij, and Chris Tomson formed the band early in 2006, when they were finishing up their studies at Columbia University. Taking their name from a movie Koenig made during his freshman year, the band started out by playing gigs at the university's literary societies and at parties.



The result is a fairly infectious preppy sound that the band claims is based on Afro-pop melodies and rhythms. They describe their sound as "Upper West

Side Soweto". Well, we have an insider line to that stuff and if you are expecting Fela Kuti, go figure something else. There are insistent drum-beats and 10th fret frenetic pulls (on f-hole archtops) on things like "Cousins" and "A-Punk" reminiscent of gumboots stuff, but the all-white band from East Coast Ivy League is just a tick too fast to really sit in that record store slot comfortably. There is nothing laid back about them, which is just fine, for they are very likely to do very well, and of all the bands that night, are most likely to break past the Alternative label. If they continue. For its scary to note that the kids are just one year out in the open and just now starting a world tour with all three NYC dates completely sold out, along with dates in Great Britain.

30 Seconds to Mars is rock band from Los Angeles, formed in 1998. The band features actor Jared Leto as vocalist, rhythm guitarist and songwriter with his brother Shannon on drums and Tomo Milicevic on guitar. Unlike other thespians who also rock, Jared refuses to allow promo material for the band to mention his acting career. Vocally, he reminded one of our group of the lead singer for Filter, while other critics have mentioned he sounds more like Maynard Keenan of Tool.



Lyricaly, well, there is something in the zeitgeist about what they do, for the songs are all about fantasy outer space encounters and spaceship battles. Woolfmother comes to mind. A number of groups, from Led Zep to Jackson Browne and Neil Young have mined this territory from time to time (remember Ziggy Stardust?), but lately we have been hearing a lot of entire bands and albums devoted to the extraterrestrial, like this life we live right now is not wierd enough.

Jared has said that the songs have an underlying message that can be interpreted in many different ways, depending on the listener, much in the way that "After the Gold Rush" or the Bowie vehicle "The Man Who Fell to Earth" are about what humans do to one another than escapism.

That said, the Leto brothers appeared well on the way to owning the packed stadium, with Jared doing everything from leaping into the audience, pressing the flesh from the stage on his knees, to miking the audience participation right up to their hit single, "Kings and Queens", which is going through some heavy rotation right now. One thing you can say for Leto: that man can work a crowd hard and work hard to get there he did.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of their climactic song, with just minutes left on the clock, disaster hit the band with a ferociously bad timed total and complete power outage, with not so much as a squeak allowed from any of the mikes.

The look on the man's face when he realized he did not even have a way to provide stage patter to fill in the silence was devastating and for a lesser mortal would have caused a furious stage walkoff. After a couple of minutes, power was restored, lights came back up and to give Leto enormous credit, he not only restarted the song from the beginning with energy and zip, he actually got the audience to sing along, forcing the energy level way back up to earn a well-deserved standing ovation.

AFI (short for 'A Fire Inside'), is commonly thought to be a fairly recent East Bay band, but the band was formed in Ukiah in 1991 during high school.



The band broke up as the members went their separate ways to college, but reunited as they dropped out of school to continue their Misfits-inspired punk in 1995. They caught the ear of the Nitro label and hooked up with Offspring's Dexter Holland for a track or two. Davey Havok had been to UC Berkeley and the band played at the famous punk venue Gilman Street, which led to the members settling here in the East Bay. Davey Havok does vocals, Jade Puget guitars, Hunter Burgan bass and Adam Carson pounds the drums.



Havok came out dressed in a silver lame lounge-suit and proceeded to posture and jump and swish his way from one side of the stage to the other, while Puget and Burgan made good use of their wireless amp connections to run criss-crossing across the stage and do whirls while continuing to play. Puget does have an "irritating emo-haircut" as one reviewer put it, but looking closely at the man's technique revealed a good deal more complexity going on with fancy pull-offs, extensive righthand hammer-ons and rhythmic mashups that show how putting your time in with an instrument while avoiding drugs really pays off.





Relative newcomers on the block, Muse, proved to be the big seller of the evening. As mentioned before, Jim Harrington could not stop glowing about their performance. Muse is an alternative rock band from Devon, England. Since their inception, the band has comprised Matthew Bellamy (vocals, guitar, piano), Christopher Wolstenholme (bass, backing vocals), and Dominic Howard (drums). Muse are known for their energetic and extravagant live performances and their fusion of many music genres, including progressive rock, classical music and electronica.



They have released five albums since 1999.

What can one say about one of the best NSSN's in a long time? Nothing to add to what Harrington has written. Other than this youtube clip of Muse performing "Uprising" along with a little audience participation.

**[http://www.youtube.com/v/iFJqM0iGvf0&hl=en\\_US&fs=1&rel=0](http://www.youtube.com/v/iFJqM0iGvf0&hl=en_US&fs=1&rel=0)**

Support live music wherever you are, for live music is the surest sign that there just may be intelligent life somewhere in the Universe.