

**FOO FIGHTERS**  
**KAISER AUDITORIUM, OAKLAND**  
**APRIL 11, 2003**

Escorted the girls to Friday's punkfest at the Kaiser Auditorium in Oaktown and came away well pleased that the Spirit Lives. That Special Goodness, a new project band started up by Pat Wilson, drummer for Weezer, opened the show at 7:30 pronto.



Wilson showed high professionalism and demonstrated superb song-writing skills, but remained consciously at disadvantage in opening two hours before the enormously popular Foo Fighters. It's a shame that his band tends to

be slotted into the "opening act" and "also playing" role, and we feel that, given some time, his three-piece unit will develop into something more significant. Also, we all tended to agree that his songs would have benefited from a fuller instrumental backing, as three guys can only do so much in the format he has chosen. Far more disciplined and tight than a real full-bore thrash-punk band, the sound seemed oddly thin, although loud enough, at times.

Local faves, The Transplants, are at present entirely unknown beyond the punk aficionado group and that is just about to change radically when the *Matrix II* comes out, for these boys did the soundtrack. Judging by the reaction, this group is destined to skyrocket for they have combined the diamond with the pearl by successfully combining punk spirit, American street authenticity stripped of British mannerisms, well-crafted rap lyrics, rough and tumble melodic rock lines, and well-orchestrated instrumentation.

**(post concert note 2007: The Transplants turned out to be a project band, built for the one CD plus a brief tour, and not destined or designed to continue.)**

A big problem at many of the rap/thrash/punk concerts hosted by LIVE 105 has been hearing the words of what was said while the instruments tended to lose themselves in a mixing board mush of undistinguished yammer, resulting in a long set of noise with no point and a lot of histrionics and stupid grandstanding.

The whole point of rap was and is to get the message across and bands that forget this wind up playing only to drunk friends and girlfriends in basement clubs sticky with stale beer until that last angry night when the bassist finally kicks in the drum set out of clueless frustration.

There are many who Would Be Heard, but if you sound just like Joe Lizard and the Dynatones, you will either die an ugly death on stage or wind up playing Vegas before a lot of middle-aged middle-class folks wearing mono-color polyester and sipping tropical drinks out of glasses with paper umbrellas and it don't matter how angry or righteous you feel, or how many tats you bear or how loud and long you can scream, because music is business, baby. Or its The Clash. There are no other alternatives.

I have seen that night when the drumset gets kicked in during some atavistic howling rage over the door take, leaving the band logo down there with the paper cups and the beer puddles as the rain starts to fall and it is not a pretty sight.

The Transplants, however, are about to blast upward out of all this to the Land of Limo chauffeurs and pink champagne on ice and for these homies we wish them all the best. Their debut CD is a killer, loaded with hooks and smart lyrics and no compromise, reminiscent of the early days of Social Distortion and all of us in Oaktown, singing along with track #12, "Down in Oakland", wish them the very best.



Following a band that has completed the soundtrack to a major motion picture on the verge of release would give most lesser mortals some pause. But Dave Grohl, former drummer for Nirvana -- yes, that Nirvana -- is one who has stared at death more than once, has faced adversity in his career that has destroyed others and has, amazingly, come out on top, "smelling like roses." After frantically cementing a band together while its lead singer and Star -- and his best friend -- self-destructed on heroin, and then after his friend and bandmate blew his brains out with a shotgun, after his band-mate's wife savagely tried to destroy herself, the band and everyone around her in a long, drawn-out public display of inchoate fury, we can say that Dave Grohl perhaps deserves some pats on the back just for staying alive, let alone coming together well enough to form a kick-ass band that has attained world prominence.



By the time the Foo Fighters took the stage, the place was sold out, with every seat taken in the massive auditorium, people standing in the aisles and the entire floor below packed wall to wall. The FF did not fail to deliver, managing to launch into hyperdrive with the first song and never letting up until the last notes of a furiously electric "Everlong" echoed some 90 minutes later. Unlike many thrashing punk bands, the Foo Fighters manage to modulate the delivery with dramatic pauses and songs of intense quiet, which brought out the starlit "bic tribute" at least twice. Grohl also shows his experience in that the vocals contain melody in counterpoint to the instrumentation, which craftsmanship other bands can only yet dream of. Yes, he can scream with the loudest of them, but the difference is that Grohl can do it *on key*, and, stay on the downbeat, while still conveying the sense of uncontrolled, all guns blazing, take no prisoners emotion.

In the translation from studio to arena, obviously some exchanges needed to be made, for this was a venue for full-bore rock 'n roll and punk, not effete musicianship. The jazz-like nuances of the studio, and the smooth musical bridges with accompanied overdubs, had to give way to the high-voltage showmanship of the big stage, but the results were not disappointing at all. Visually, the show pulled out the stops for a stunning light show that complemented the head-banging quite well. A number of drummers expressed envy at the bright light display built into the drum dias.



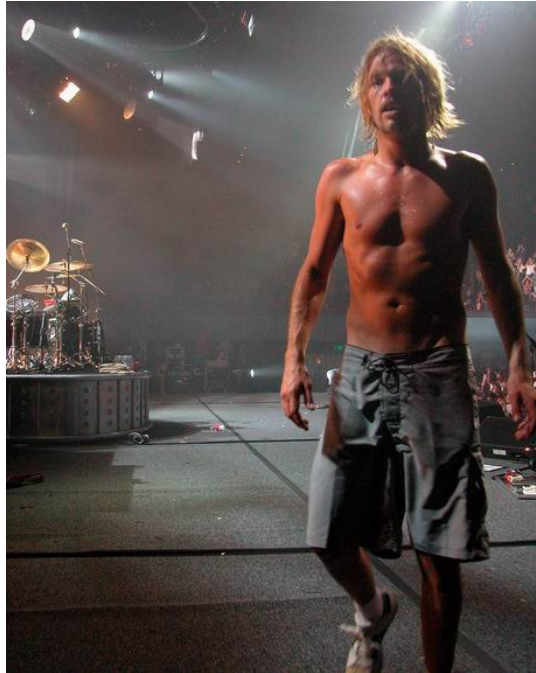
A special high occurred during an extended seven-minute jam on *Stacked Dead Actors*, where Dave managed to put in at least five of his signature howls,

a kind of scream that seems to come from the depths of some animal born sometime around the time of the saber-tooth tiger.



Grohl has a canny sense of dramatic energy, as well as a charming sense of self-deprecation, thus he saved the crossover hit, "Learn to Fly" for starting the encore, claiming , "Actually, [I think ] it's a pretty stupid little song."

Some critics have claimed that the FF are working over territory already covered. If so, then play it again. The SRO crowd, clearly loved it.



If you did a TV appearance on Jay Leno in Burbank one night, played a concert in Bakersfield the next and followed up with a concert in front of 20,000 fans in Oakland the next, you might be inclined to sweat a little like this, too.

All pictures here of the April 11, 2003 show taken by David Smith, courtesy of the Foo Fighters. Visit [www.foofighters.com](http://www.foofighters.com) for more information on future show dates and merchandise.

One thing we did notice, was the elfin look of the kids that showed up for these "hard rock" concerts. Clear skin and clear eyes predominated over the drug-addled, swamped-out look of previous years and one could not help but feel some sense of things having somehow gotten better in this age group, even as the world has gotten harsher and more brutal around them. These are elf children, born of the starlight age. Even Dave Grohl, for all the horror he has witnessed in person, he remains innocent and powerful in that innocence.

Unfortunately, this does not exempt one from being beset by demons.