

**FOO FIGHTERS**  
**BERKELEY COMMUNITY THEATER**  
**JULY 15, 2006**  
**IN YOUR HONOR**



We caught the Foo Fighters Thursday night at the Berkeley Community Theater on a spontaneous whim. When 100 seats were opened up suddenly from the sold-out show, Island-Life Event Coordinator, E.Venus, phoned in the news and tickets were gotten pronto.

For those of you needed it little catch-up, in the late 80s, popular music remained in the doldrums, a slush pile of aging punk rockers, tediously untalented bimbos, and general apathy in a malaise-ridden the economy governed by a nonsensical Reaganomics. In particular, the Pacific Northwest suffered by the general economic conditions of the time, with people languishing in the middle of the lumber industry downturn.

The brittle but powerful music of singer/songwriter Kurt Cobain gave these people a voice of their own. Cobain's band, Nirvana, created an entirely new music genre called "grunge", which gave people a lot of heart during difficult times. That was until 5 April, 1994, when Cobain penned a vitriolic suicide note, put the barrel of a shotgun into his mouth and blasted his talent and tortured soul onto the blood-splattered ceiling.

As his widow, Courtney Love, proceeded to excoriate her own soul publicly on stage -- and in several crisis clinics -- for several years, the former drummer of Cobain's band, Dave Grohl, formed a new band called the Foo Fighters, which developed sufficient notoriety as to provoke Courtney Love into seizing the rights to all of Cobain's music.

The actual term 'Foo Fighter' was coined by US Airforce pilots during the Second World War to describe the anomalous balls of light that they saw flying alongside them at high altitudes. As well as naming the band after a form of UFO, Dave recorded music in a aircraft hangar on the site of the former airbase located in Roswell, New Mexico. The name of his label is called Roswell Records.



The Foo Fighters lineup has fluctuated between three and five members, indicating that this particular outfit is not well-suited for comfortable coasting.



A typical Foo Fighters record consists of loud, brash guitars, extensive distortion, and severely oblique lyrics. It is no surprise that in their latest effort, the former Led Zeppelin drummer, John Paul Bonham, shows up for a cameo

performance. Dave Grohl, however, has frequently demonstrated a more sophisticated and musically apt sensibility that all of this headbanging allows for. The result of this is a dual CD set, nominated now for over five Grammys, featuring a loud electric CD paired with a strictly acoustic CD, which allows for the softer, sensitive side to emerge. In promotion of this CD set, Titled "In Your Honor," Dave has assembled a nine person ensemble, featuring regular Foo on drums Taylor Hawkins, Chris Schiflet on guitar, bassist Nate Mendel, former Foo guitarist Pat Smear, along with additions Petra Haden on violin, Rami Jaffee on keyboards, Drew Hester on percussion, Petra Haden on violin, Rami Jaffee on keyboards, Drew Hester on percussion and a cameo on lead guitar from their roadie whose name we unfortunately could not obtain. Photographer Danny Clinch tossed in a pleasant harmonica solo.



Critics are saying, the first CD of "In Your Honor," is largely business as usual, but the second CD provides significant sonic surprises, as in the Gershwin-style "Virginia Moon".

After a quite a nice warm up, from newcomer Timmy Curran, who supplied a tasty set of solo guitar heavily inflected with Appalachian style blues, Dave Grohl led off with a Spanish style Romance "On the Mend" which culminated with a full ensemble crescendo. While Dave stuck to a full-bodied dreadnaught for most of the evening, swapping guitars only after busting a string, Schifflet and Smear rotated through a droolingly enviable assortment of f-hole semi-hollow body arch-tops with silver appointments to die for.

At one point, Dave Grohl commented that the tour was a pleasant change from the usual headache-inducing and voice-robbing yowling. Because of the size of the ensemble, all members remained seated throughout the performance as there simply was no room on stage for jumping around or mic stand theatrics. In fact, it was rather gratifying to watch, very talented musicians devote themselves to sophisticated and well coordinated harmony. It's clear the Dave Grohl is a very talented multi-instrumentalist as are most of his band members. Jaffee worked not one, not two, not three, but four keyboard sets as well as an electric accordion. Petra Haden worked an electric mandolin and provided quite delightful vocals during a duet on "Virginia Moon," as well as solo vocal on the aetherial "Floating".

Some people have accused Dave & Co. of copping out, of doing something other than what they originally did, whatever that was. It seems there is a tremendous sentiment out there, which wants to preserve certain musicians in drops of amber. It seems these people want to hear the same old hits the same old way over and over all the time.

A recent flame on one i-net post slammed Neil Young for doing a tour to promote his "Greendale" project instead of recapping the oldies from CSNY, thus denying the pleasures of a "singalong" fest. Would that these zombies simply die and leave the living alone.

Hell, if we wanted to hear Paul McCartney, we would've paid \$100 a ticket to see the old guy do the same old Beatles. Or maybe sat at home with headphones on listening to "Revolver". Over and over again. Interminably.

The Foo Fighters put on an excellent show, whether fully electric or acoustic, and are always worth the price of admission -- especially if you happen to score tickets in the first four rows at the last-minute of a fully sold-out two night series of shows. They well-earned their thunderous ovation at close. A spare "Everlong" with an ensemble crescendo tacked on concluded the encore.

If you don't like the music, go out and make some of your own. Just you try.