

FOO FIGHTERS

ORACLE ARENA

February 2, 2008

WHAT IF I SAID YOU WERE NOT LIKE THE OTHERS



It may be said Dave Grohl is very unlike anyone else, and that is a good thing. The Island-Life Caboose trundled out to the Oracle Arena with four reviewers in tow to catch the Foo Fighters for their latest flyby in the Bay Area. They were preceded by two other bands, the first of which we substantially missed, but which consisted of a female singer wearing crotch-high boots, injection-molded white leather pants and fronting a basic AC/DC-KISS re-run of

energetic noise. She seemed sexy enough with vintage Robert Plant-style bend-over backwards and howl types of moves, struts and all kinds of groovy things, but the folks who had arrived early announced to friends via cell phone "Yeah, she could do one note well -- and that was a screech."

Man, music is a tough, tough business. Oh well.

Against Me! touring in promotion of their latest CD, "Searching for a Former Clarity", followed up with a charging, take no breath or break, full bore punk set that was refreshing in the very accomplished band's ability to modulate the thrashing with variable pacing and even some nod to musicality in vocals.



The group has been canned for all kinds of stupid reasons, most of which have to do with rather precious ideas about keeping punk "pure", not "selling out" or similar bull---t. As one reviewer put it, it shouldn't take the pierced mall

fashionistas, pro-salon spike and dye jobs, and effete poseurs in carefully ripped tshirts to tell you punk has died and gone a while ago.

Music evolves and so do the musicians and so does the culture. Maggie Thatcher and Reagan are long gone and so is Sid Vicious. Eventually the surviving three chord screamers learn to play their instruments and stop charging the miserable five dollars a head in basements for gigs and that is just the way it goes.

So much for that. Put it all behind you; even Grunge Rock. You don't like the music? DIY.

All of us (age ranges 18-50) agreed that the Florida-based Against Me! performed impressively. Tom Gabel is the front man for this spare outfit of three guitars and drums dressed in black, and he does have a couple decent shots in the arm with the antiwar song "Justin" and the political lament "From Her Lips to Gods' Ears" with its accusatory refrain "Condalezza! Condalezza!" R4NT magazine also gave them a solid thumbs up, so we expect these guys to keep on, perhaps filling the space left when Social Distortion finally ebbs away due to attrition.

That is not a day we look forward to at all, but its good to know that there are folks like Antiflag and Against Me! still out there, irritated, angry, talented and ready to testify.

When Dave Grohl strolled out with his eight person ensemble, he sort of surveyed the crowd from the stage edge-catwalk for a few moments and commented, "Hey, there are a lot of you out there! I really like this!" The place

looked pretty full by that point. The official capacity is somewhere near 19,000 folks in assigned seating, boxes, and the General Admission Pit, however a 50 yard runway ending in a central drop stage had been added to the Pit, while a third of the seats were blocked off by the positioning of the main stage. We would estimate the crowd Saturday night to be somewhere between eight and nine thousand souls. Which meant that even the guys had to stand in line to take a leak at the restrooms.



We have reviewed the Foos here before, and have found them in every incarnation to be very well worth the time, and Jim Harrington, who usually is a

pretty reliable online reviewer stated in his headline "Grohl, Foo Fighters knock out Oakland crowd".

Harrington did flop in attributing Grohl's birthplace to Ohio, when Grohl has repeatedly stated that he hails from Northern Virginia and a suburb of Washington D.C., which is where we met the man some quarter a century ago as Dave was taking a break from working in an upholstery factory to dig pipeline ditches.

Oh the glamour of budding rock stars.



Saturday night, however, Grohl flew up and down that long catwalk, pulling heavy metal, punk, grunge and -- in one memorable moment, a blues solo

-- from his several guitars. At one point he and Pat Smear engaged in a little 'head cuttin'" with Grohl out on the extended catwalk and Smear pulling riffs from his Telecaster on the edge of the stage.

There was a lot of nice "showbiz" stuff during the two hour plus show, during which the band extended "Stacked Actors" and "This is a Call" into magnum opuses that Harrington correctly correlated with evocations of back in the day when mighty Led Zeppelin stomped the earth and the Rolling Stones laid the landscapes to waste. He is not quite Mick Jagger yet, but he certainly is approaching that level of Rock Superstar, taking entire arenas into the palm of his hand and having them sing along with the well-known songs.

A really nice touch was the lowering of a suspended stage into the pit to allow a more central view of the team as they did the acoustically-based numbers from "In Your Honor", which certainly did not cap the energy as Grohl leapt on top of the piano to strum furiously during "But Honestly"; breaking strings were visible even from the nosebleed seats. This section ended with a solo Grohl launching into a muted and well-loved "Everlong" on solid-body electric before running back to finish the song in full head-banging metal form.

Really nice touch, dude.

As for those ditch-digging days and the upholstery factory, well, Dave has comment that "those were Virginia jobs. The only kind of work you could get there. . .".

Saturday night proved that those days are long gone and good riddance for that for Dave Grohl and Co.

Official Setlist goes as follows:

"Let It Die"
"The Pretender"
"Times Like These"
"Breakout"
"Learn to Fly"
"Cheer Up, Boys (Your Make Up is Running)"
"This is a Call" (the one with the 'fingernails' refrain)
"Stacked Actors"
("acoustic" set)
"Skin and Bones"
"Aurora"
"My Hero"
"Cold Day in the Sun"
"But, Honestly"
"Everlong"
(return to mainstage, full electric)
"Monkey Wrench"
"All My Life"

Encore:

"Big Me"
"Long Road to Ruin"
"Best of You"

The consensus of our four reviewers, plus the peanut gallery up in the "nosebleeds"?

"That was just awesome!"

You go, Dave.