

NSSN

DECEMBER 12, 2008



In what has become an annual Tradition, the Island-Life staff trundled out to the sold-out Live 105 Not So Silent Night Concert, held this year at the Oracle Arena before 15,000 adoring fans. Managed to snag Franz Ferdinand and Bloc Party. Arrived too late to snag Jacks Mannequin. Heard we did not miss much and one reviewer for the Mercury News commented "The Orange County piano-pop quartet, led by vocalist-pianist Andrew McMahon, sounded like Ben Folds Five being run through an "American Idol" sanitizer. The group delivered 25

minutes of lightweight tunes, all of which wouldn't sound out of place next to a Jonas Brothers tracks on a Radio Disney play list."

Music. Its a rough road.

Franz Ferdinand, hailing from Scotland, performed a tight, energetic set although they never seemed to get what city they were performing in, as the lead singer Alex Kapranos, kept saying, "Put your hands together San Francisco!"

No dude, the Oracle Arena is in Oaktown across the Bay.



Nevertheless the music was rocking, including the high point of "This Fire" and "Take Me Out." Stylistically the band does rhythmic post-New Wave stuff with a lot of flash. Lyrically, well its only rock and roll arising at one point to "I woke up this afternoon thinking, I am going to make someone fall in love with me tonight."

Bloc Party, out of London and headed by the quirky but charismatic Kele Okereke, manage to put in a more varied performance that, in our opinion, had a bit more edge than Franz. Okereke has the vocal chops hands down over Ferdinand's Kapranos, no question about it. He and his band, lacking the drop-dead model good looks of nearly everybody in FF threw themselves physically into their performance, knowing the sandwich slot is a tough one, between FF kicking off and preceding Death Cab. Nevertheless their underground hit "Helicopter" rose way up and the spirit of Past Masters, like Jimi, nodded their ghostly heads.



Death Cab For Cutie is a band we, like the Merc reviewer, have seen more than a few times this year, a problem for a band whose catalogue is yet thin, as good as it is. The standards, now well known by the fans, were performed energetically and about as fresh as Gibbard can make them.



The Killers, by report, closed out with a fairly lackluster performance more evocative of The Other Radio Station, which was holding its own annual Concerts for Kids that night with Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders at the Paramount, than KITS, which presents itself as The Alternative Station. Thats too bad, as we have liked the Killers in the past, and have liked what we saw as very dynamic shows. According to the Mercury reviewer, "The group's retro-rock sound borrowed from a variety of sources, from synth-pop to roller disco and from '80s David Bowie to classic Cure, but it was rarely compelling. Not surprisingly, the Killers did their best work on the early single "Somebody Told Me" and other material from the 2004 debut "Hot Fuss.""



It may be that the Killers, slated for a sold-out Warfield gig the following night were holding back. Even the best has an off night, and the annual NSSN, in its move to the larger Arena venue generally tends to be a fairly spectacular experience.

Incidentally, the word is that Chissie tore up the stage with a blazing performance for the annual benefit for children held by KFOG. March 4, the Pretenders return to rock out beneath the purple chandeliers of the venerable Fillmore.