

SOCIAL DISTORTION
OPENING NITE FOX THEATER
February 06, 2009



THIRTEEN'S MY LUCKY NUMBER

Friday night launched the long awaited concert venue at the Fox Theatre on T'graph in Oakland. The long-derelict theatre, built in the twenties as a "movie palace" has not had a paying customer walk through the doors in over 43 years, but has been the subject of one of the country's most lavish restorations in an effort to revitalized Oaktown's nightlife, together with her sister around the block, the Paramount.



The 75 million dollar multi-use renovation project will feature a state-of-the-art theater with flexible capacity from 1,500 to 2,800. The multiple seating configurations include general admission, cabaret style seating, and reserved seating.

According to the Friends of the Oakland Fox group, "the theater's architecture is an interesting mixture of styles: Indian, Moorish, Medieval (the gargoyles at roof level), and Baghdadian (its name was originally to be "The Bagdad" [sic]). Its style is perhaps best summed up by another writer's assessment: "one part Arab and three parts Hollywood hokum."

The space consists of a seated balcony, reserved box seats, and a logically designed series of standing terraces about fifteen to twenty feet wide arranged in a semicircle with balusters and wet bars looking down on the stage and a smallish "pit" that could hold about 150-200 folks. It really was an excellent design that allowed for easy traffic to flow up side and middle aisles and provide excellent visuals as well as acoustics for all spots in the house.



After a quasi-private gala (Tickets starting at \$450 a pop on Thursday night, the venue kicked off in high style with a venerable icon of Alternative Music, Social Distortion, preceded by rough rockers Black Tibetans and the popular Santa Cruz group Devil Makes Three.

The Black Tibetans opened up at 8:05pm with a crunching punk set that featured the rhythm guitarist performing a fair number of antics with his instrument, which seemed to be assaulting the poor fellow until the man just fell to the floor at one point. During a particularly energetic song, the man climbed onto the stereo stack, and when the break came, he descended the quickest way possible -- he jumped. After taking a fall of some fifteen feet in mid solo he skidded forward on his knees with the lead vocalist looking down on him with an expression that said, "WTF!"

Rehearsals must be really rough.

There version of "Have Love, will Travel" stood out.

Devil Makes 3 is actually a bluegrass trio consisting of guitarist/frontman Pete Bernhard, stand-up bassist Lucia Turino and guitarist/banjo player Cooper McBean and they have been garnering some buzz down Santa Cruz way and also from Europe from where the group has recently concluded a wildly successful tour.



Bernhard and McBean both have fronted punk bands before this rendition that largely features Bernhard's gritty barroom lyrics and powerful vocals, which sort of makes sense given the headliners, however it was clear that the 3,000 soul Sold Out Fox was not the venue for them that night, although Bernhard carried forth like a trooper, shouting, howling and testifying with fan favorites like "Old No. 7", and a curiously punk "St. James Infirmary". Bracketing the acoustic band with two electric punk groups seemed a little unfair, and we would like to see them again in a more intimate venue. They were actually pretty good, taken in themselves and on their own merits, but suffered by comparison and set

placement. A couple groupies, driven up from Santa Cruz agreed with our evaluation.

Given that the preceding band consisted of such thin electronics, the extended wait of some half hour to forty five minutes for the headliners was really inexcusable. Social D didn't come on until ten sharp and the preceding sets had clocked in at 30 and 40 minutes a piece, starting at eight. That's a lot of standing and waiting.

Minor kink there.

When Mike Ness and company finally did walk on stage, they launched into a blistering 90 minute set, beginning with "Don't Drag Me Down" and zipping through the tunes found on the Live at the Roxy CD, including Bad Luck, Mommy's Little Monster, Mass Hysteria, So Far Away, Prison Bound, and Sick Boys. They also tossed in newer material, with Ness reminding the audience Social D had been thrashing around for about thirty years.

"Which makes me about 36 years old, right?" he quipped.



ERROR: undefined
OFFENDING COMMAND: f'~

STACK: