

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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Articles prior to December 5, 2018

Push/Play Rocks the Strand: November 21, 2009

Written by David on November, 23 2009

Push/Play Rocks the Strand

One could literally feel the music of Push/Play everywhere in the Strand Theatre during Saturday's night's two-set show. From the first song to the climactic conclusion, this band's full sounds filled the historic theater and repeatedly thrilled the crowd.

In short, Saturday's musical extravaganza was like having a live band playing in your living room. Physically the rhythm and energy of Push/Play's passionate playing tingled up one's spine and reverberated in your very bones. It was very cool sensation to walk around the building and feel the music pulsing in the walls, up through the floor and into and through the balcony. The Strand Theatre actually vibrated and trembled with music as Push/Play repeatedly built walls and waves of sound from slow swoons to sonic screams and wails.

Musically, this band is very flexible, fluid and subtly flashy in its melodic vocal harmonies and in the sheer technical skill, bravura joy and the impassioned playing. About midway through the first set, a historic romp through rock history from Rhythm and Blues to the Beatles and beyond, I felt that this band should quit their day jobs, record some original music and go pro. The second set was even more splendid and phantasmagoric especially the ridiculously impressive play of lead guitarist Gary Shrader.

In fact, Push/Play are six very talented musicians who have been in 28 separate bands during their long local careers and have been playing together for about a year. Yet, after hearing their music I think this band should change its name to Plush/Play because of the incredibly rich, plush and fat sounds they coax from their instruments and voices.

Another surprise for me was the amazing vocal range of lead singer Don Williams, a giant of a man, who hit some surprisingly high tones throughout the night as he shared lead vocals with the band and frequently joined in the instrumental rhapsodies evoked and conjured up by this rather magical ensemble of musicians.

Push/Play is practically an all-star ensemble of talent and each member's skills and love of playing was showcased throughout the night as they repeatedly formed visual and aural walls of guitars across the stage. These nuanced, rich waves of inspired play echoed and ricocheted into the theatre via Shrader's Claptonesque guitar work, the rhythm guitars of Steve Mathies and Williams, the thumping bass of Bobby Toon, through the haunting keyboard style of Dave Rasche and the smooth, rhythmic drumming of Jim Whitacre. Each musician made his instrument sing throughout the jam-filled evening.

Equally, impressive was the musically challenging array of tunes performed during the 36-songs Push/Play chose for their two-sets. These songs ranged from the heartland rock ballads of Bob Seger, John Mellencamp and Kid Rock to more funk-inspired tunes like "Superlove" and included complex instrumental works by Grand Funk Railroad and The Alan Parsons Project.

Musically, the band built to an impressive crescendo as the evening wore on, which reached an apex with Shrader's extended solo in "Still Got the Blues." I've seen Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Albert Collins and other blues masters play live and Shrader can and does evoke just as much raw, primal energy and passion by bending strings. His animated, virtuoso solo was mentally orgasmic and ridiculously impressive and left the crowd standing and applauding in shock and awe.

The audience remained standing during the almost baroque final rush of songs and demanded an encore from this entertaining, emotionally satisfying and exceptionally talented group of inspired musicians. In conclusion, I shall repeat an earlier refrain: if these dudes aren't professional musicians by choice, they damn well should be.

Submitted by: Terrance Aldridge

This review does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

Images on this post:

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