

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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Articles prior to December 5, 2018

Rockphoria: Review

Written by David on December, 23 2009

Rockphoria wows the Strand Theatre

A rock 'n' roll Christmas extravaganza graced the stage at the Strand Theatre as the musicians and singers of Rockphoria jammed 'out to and for packed houses twice this past weekend.

'This was the rock show to see in Shelbyville this year,' said Joey Gaudin, of Smashed Productions, after Friday's performance. Strand volunteer Bob Schlick agreed, and if standing ovations are any indication then the crowds on each night concurred.

'This is the best Rockphoria show yet,' Schlick said, about this the third production of the concert series this year at the Strand by Smashed Productions. The twin weekend shows featured 'one hit-wonders' from the past four decades performed by local musicians and singers ranging from 18 to 60 years of age playing to an all-ages audience; from infants to the elderly.

Indeed, the crowd during Saturday's performance had to be getting tired after repeatedly rising up and sitting down so many times for standing ovations to honor the finely-tuned musicians and rhapsodic, spell-binding singers gracing the stage.

'This is an amazing group of musicians up here and it's a privilege for us singers to perform with them,' said Glenn Yarwood, before one song. Each of the nine singers vocally soared and shined individually, as well as in melodious harmonies throughout the shows.

From the opening lyrics by Scott Shrader, who nailed a challenging and intricately scaled song to the closing crescendo of the entire cast jamming and singing in unison, this was, indeed, a concert extravaganza for the ages. The twin shows were exciting, often exhilarating, evenings of music by an accomplished ensemble of seven instrumental maestros, several singing divas and a few richly-toned dudes crooning, screaming and wailing songs that tend to stick in your head.

Each of five divas on stage displayed a wide range of vocal skills, from the big, often sassy, yet sweet voice of Bryanna Justice through the sultry lullaby-like voice of Amanda O'Connor to the smooth, rich, velvet tones of Aimee Yarwood. It was, however, the final two songs of the first set that hushed, stunned and flabbergasted the crowds. First, Tre Dillman's version of 'Total Eclipse of the Heart,' captivated audience members with her voice which floats, lilts and soars across songs like a blues-filled butterfly. It was, however, Willandra Macklin's rendition of 'I Will Survive,' which stole the show. Her rich, silky-soul-filled voice defies description. It is just the pure singing of voice that becomes an instrument in itself, a voice that gladdens brain, body and booty.

As for the dudes, we've already noted the younger Shrader vocal skills and it should be noted that the lead guitar work of his older brother Gary also defies description; his is a finely-honed talent that needs to be heard to be appreciated: words alone can't do justice to his passionate play. The same inspired instrumental skills, talents and passionate play were evident in every band member. Each individually and in unison rocked supreme across the catchy song lists of Rockphoria. This extremely rich, instrumentally sound and fluid group is made up of rhythm guitarist Laura Harmon, bassists Jim 'Biscuit' Wisker, keyboardist Dave Rasche, drummer Jim Whitacre, percussionist Don Williams and the aforementioned Shrader on lead guitar. This band even morphed bigger on stage and fatter in sound as Gaudin grabbed his guitar to join the musical celebration during a raucous Chuck Berry inspired finale.

As for the crooning dudes, Bobby Toon belted out two funky, blues inspired tunes that wowed the crowd, Larry Brandt sang with a throaty, intentionally jaded voice and Glenn Yarwood's voice echoed each song he sang, be it raining g down softly or jumping like jazz across the stage. Even the MC, Andy Erickson, got in to the act as the entire ensemble gathered on stage during the final rousing set of songs performed crescendo-like that capped each night's show.

In short, Rockphoria lived up to the hype and delivered on its promise to gather a hand-picked all-star cast of talent on one stage. This concert series, conceived by Gaudin, should only continue to grow in strength, skill and style during its future incarnations. As a matter of fact, anyone who enjoys quality music and singing should see any and all these performers

each and every time they perform in any musical guise. There be talent in town and it enjoys, revels in and is passionate about playing for and to you.

Submitted by: Terrance Aldridge

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

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