

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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Chiaroscuro ? Review

Written by David on April, 27 2010

Post-Rock concert features trio of solely instrumental bands

Music on the edge filled the hallowed halls of the Strand Theatre Saturday night in a post-rock concert featuring three bands who took the crowd on extended instrumental journeys into sounds more often heard in Art-House venues in larger cities than Shelbyville.

This was not your mother and father's rock concert. It was rather an avant-garde show, in the literal sense of the word, filled with musical advance scouts, searching, probing and exploring the outer regions of rock and roll.

Each of the three bands involved favored and featured essentially different tones, and styles of play, yet remained within the aesthetics of the post rock genre.

"Post-rock is almost always instrumental and goes from very quiet to very violent," said Joshua Carter, lead guitarist of Chiaroscuro, Saturday's headliners. "It is the music you would hear at the end of the world."

This show aptly opened with "Sonoro(us)," a four-piece band from Fort Wayne, whose introductory song rolled from the stage with a slow hypnotic, semi-symphonic sound as bassist Travis Wilcoxson, stood, as he would for the remainder of the set, with his back to the crowd. This approach is another facet of the Post-rock genre, which seeks to some extent to focus on the music rather than the personality or glamour of a rock star.

This facet aside, the other musicians of "Sonoro(us)," drummer Matt Taylor and twin guitarists, Jon Parent and London Williams, soared musically and their instrumentally surreal melodies cascaded around the acoustic temple that is the Strand.

The six-song set of "Sonoro(us)" was a sparse almost minimalist excursion that was cerebral, ethereal and mystically imbued with sonorous feedback that soared into space and through time like some sort of cosmic music of the spheres.

Rising from haunting to sonic soaring sounds these musicians evoked moody and tonal emotions via strings and percussion alone, especially when playing an electric guitar with an old-school bow.

Most of the music and songs were like celestial tone-poems that seemed hypnotic and soothing as they swelled, contracted and expanded like breath in both time and space. It was through these tone poems, reminiscent of Richard Strauss, that "Sonoro(us)" explored emotion via pure sounds.

In short, "Sonoro(us)" is a band which aptly shadows the meaning of its name; its music is sonorous, if nothing else.

The next group "Metavari," is a three-piece band, also from Fort Wayne, which succinctly fuses the sounds of physical instruments with synthesized music from lap-tops scattered about the stage.

This trio comprised of keyboardist Nate Utesch, drummer Ty Bruneman and guitarist Andrew McComas played on a darkened stage with a video backdrop to enhance the effect of sightless sounds.

This band, in fact, was reminiscent of a fusion of acid jazz, trippy psychedelic rock and synthesized classical-style music all filtered into an ominous dithyrambic sound.

Their set was filled with songs that flow like water filled with musical eddies, waves and deep under-currents. It was a curious and compelling mixture of dubbed tacks, synthesized rhythms, beats and instruments played by musicians concerned with the feel and scope of music.

"Metavari," in short, is a pleasingly different band whose often esoteric music brims with counterpoints and an instrumental

poetry of songs as changing in tone as the sky on breezy day.

The final, headlining act of the night was Shelbyville's own Chiaroscuro, the heaviest sounding of all of Saturday's bands on this thought-provoking night of music.

This five-piece ensemble consists of Carter, guitarist Matt Rubodue, bassist Jeremy Hall, drummer Sean King and cellist Heidi Chestnut who recently released their debut album.

Like Sonoro(us), Chiaroscuro is band that lives up to its name. The word chiaroscuro is an old-school Renaissance Italian drawing term literally meaning a transition from light to dark and this in fact describes the musical tone of this band.

From mellow openings this band builds and then explodes into tight Expressionistic rhythms, twisting and contorting sounds on just about every song as they journey from the melodious into a maelstrom of hard-edged monstrous sound.

Another interesting feature of their music is that the band often builds its songs from variations on chords that begin simply and then cascade into tumultuous swirls of frenetic fury that haunts your head like a horror-show soundtrack. Repeatedly these chord structures build like a tempestuous leitmotif and avalanche upon the crowd like an apocalyptic storm of rhythm.

Emotionally, Chiaroscuro also creates moody, brooding and sometimes angst-filled tone poems of purely instrumental sound that at times can overwhelm the crowd: it is a nuanced journey into the abyss. The music pregnant with dread, suspense and dark shadows grows out of essentially soft melodic riffs like the masterful charcoal sketches of some demented artist.

Overall, Saturday night's post-rock concert was a thought-provoking, often moody and intensely melodramatic excursion on the frontiers of music. It was an evening that flooded the soul with sensation, provoked a myriad of emotions and conjured up many strange thoughts and experiences.

Images on this post:



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Archive File: 2010-04-27_chiaroscuro-#8211;-review.pdf

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