

Cult, Mahogany Rush delight crowd; but no one wants three free tickets

Review by Douglas Weil

Friday afternoon I found I had five tickets to the Blue Oyster Cult and Mahogany Rush concert in Omaha for that night. I only was able to put two of the tickets to use, so I tried to give the other three away, I couldn't.

It seems odd that people have been complaining about the lack of good local concerts, and yet I was unable to give away tickets to what appeared to be a potentially good show.

The music was excellent.

The evening started with Mahogany Rush taking the stage about 8:30, only a half-hour late.

Although I wasn't familiar with Mahogany Rush, I had heard promising things about the group, particularly about their guitarist, Frank Marino.

One-man band

It quickly became apparent that Frank Marino was Mahogany Rush, and the other band members were complementary fixtures.

As a matter of fact, Mahogany Rush played little of its own material, opting instead for blow-by-blow imitations of the legendary Jimi Hendrix.

As far as the crowd of 6,000 at Civic Auditorium was concerned, the Hendrix approach was a wise decision.

Marino played his Hendrix tunes convincingly, and the crowd roared with approval. Especially effective was a rock'n'roll medley of *Johnny B. Goode* and *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*. Marino was at his best on another Hendrix composition, *Star Spangled Bummer*.

On *Star Spangled Bummer*, the stage was darkened and Marino was draped in white lasers. The guitarist went through the stanza with the conviction of a crazed patriot. Everyone loved it.

Although Marino plays music from a bygone era, he is clearly a master of the style. He even played with his teeth.

Blue Oyster Cult took the stage shortly after 10 p.m., making a dramatic entrance following a classical music introduction. Explosions bellowed, lights danced and the Cult signaled it was ready to begin what turned out to over one and a half hours on non-stop energy.

Cult recognized

The Cult recently received the fame that has been promised to it by record company executives since 1971 with its new album *Agents of Fortune*. It clearly shows the members are having a good time with their music.

The Cult is built upon the crashing, pompous hand-hitting base of three guitars (sometimes four), a keyboardist and excellent percussion.

The unusual thing about the Cult is its interchangeability. Everyone in the five-man band sings and several can hold their own on percussion instruments. Most incredibly, all five Cult members can play the guitar—and do it well.

In one part of the concert, the entire Cult donned guitars and took turns at the strings. Dancing and weaving the whole time, they looked like a heavy metal version of The Temptations.

High points in the Cult set were *City in Flame*, *Born to Be Wild* and *This Ain't the Summer of Love*. Laser lights were used well in different parts of the set and magnificent during a drum solo by Albert Bouchard.

The Cult experienced some energy lapses, which resulted in short periods of ennui. Still, this was the case only during a small portion of its time on stage.

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