

arts/entertainment

Full-force Benatar strikes with strong, flawless voice

By Casey McCabe

Pat Benatar can legitimately claim the title of Rock's Reigning Queen. First of all, it is hard to doubt her sincerity as she punches through her repertoire of platinum hits.

Secondly, there is a shortage of female musicians who can show their true grit and still make it in rock's mainstream. Ideally, it would be nice not to even mention the fact of Pat's gender. But it seems to be an important part of her show, which she glamorized Friday night at Omaha's Civic Auditorium by parading on stage in a skin tight, button-up, red-and-black pantsuit.

concert review

Her gender is also an integral part of the music, as she continually offers the female perspective to such burned romanticists as Springsteen and Foreigner. And of course, she is attractive on stage, dancing and playing air guitar. And for the male section of the audience, which is usually resigned to screaming for Ted Nugent's guitar pick, there is an added incentive in Benatar's show.

The full house at Civic was a fairly diverse blend of male and female, young and not quite as young. They came to hear the hits and that's what she gave them. For having only three albums, a surprising amount of Benatar's music is instantly recognizable. The enormous amount of radio airplay she's received

attests to her ability to hit the public's nerve with her best shot.

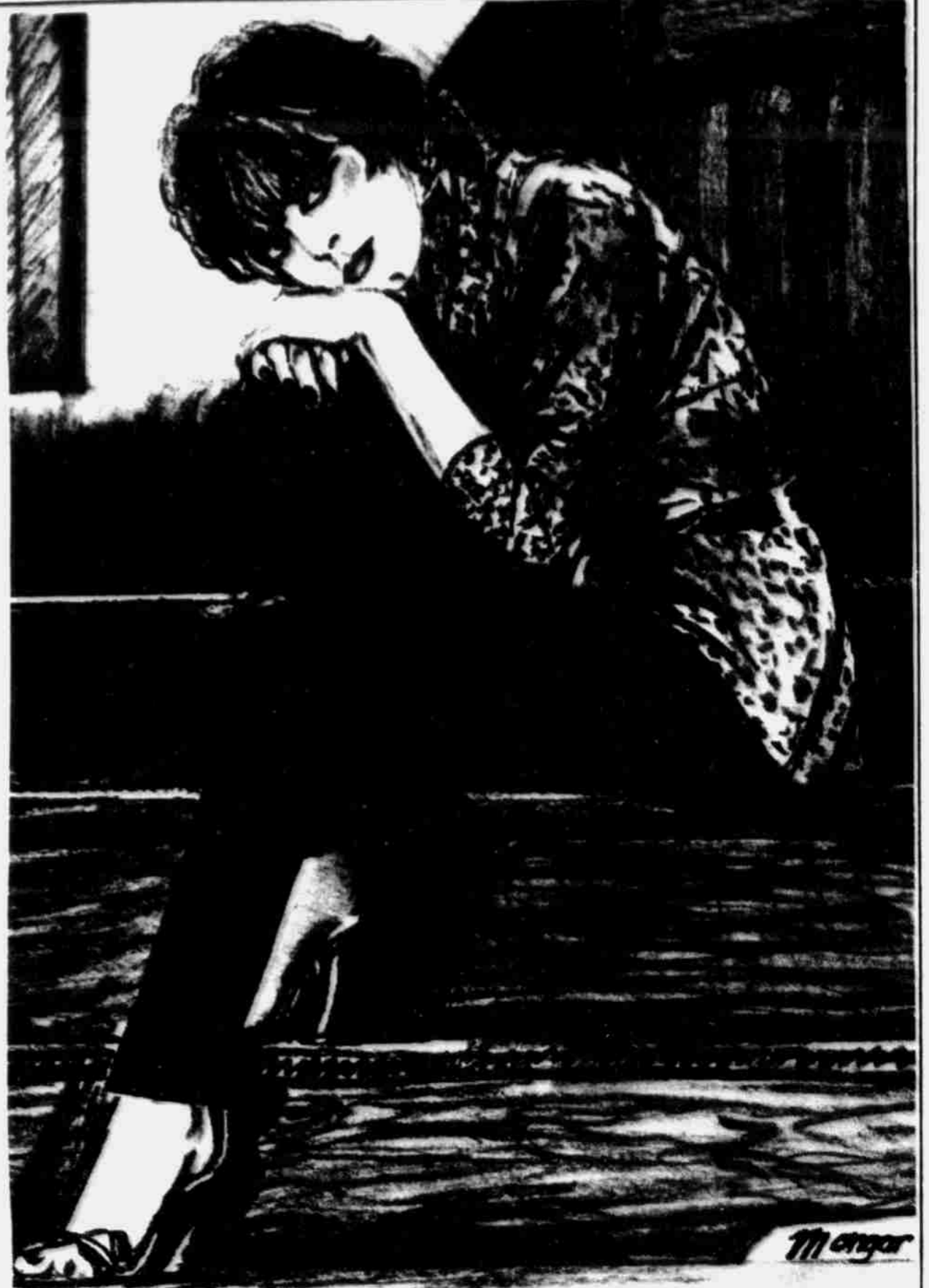
Benatar and her nameless band are not particularly spontaneous or daring in their performance, but I got the idea this was for the crowd's benefit. Benatar's three-octave voice was flawless as she hit every one of her glass-shattering high notes and never shyed away from her vocal limits. If you like performers who recapture their studio precision on stage, you would no doubt be impressed with Benatar's talents.

Benatar's health and stamina had been in question earlier in this tour, but she seemed to be working at nearly full throttle Friday night.

Her slower, more poetic material gave her the chance to showcase something more than the screaming talents of her opera-trained voice. Especially nice was "Promises In The Dark" with its smooth transitions from ballad to power-chording rock.

After winding up the show with her first hit, "Heartbreaker," Benatar was brought back for two encores. She did "Little Paradise" and the old Paul Revere and the Raiders cut "Just Like Me," certainly the best cover song she's ever undertaken. After a prolonged second encore she returned with "Helter Skelter," dedicating it to John Lennon, whose birthday happened to be Friday.

Benatar's million-selling success ensures she can always get a good crowd at \$9.50 a ticket, even though she couldn't fill Lincoln's Royal Grove a couple years ago when she was on the verge of breaking her first album. Though the rock concert fans may only be going through the motions, Pat is still kicking it out as best she knows how.



Johansen's anti-applause sign of fragmentation

By Pat Higgins

"I used to be in a group called the New York Dolls" — David Johansen introducing "Personality Crisis" to an apathetic Omaha audience.

concert review

By touring with Pat Benatar, David Johansen seems to be following Lenny Bruce's immortal advice: "Be a man — sell out." The only problem was the jammed Civic Auditorium wasn't buying.

Johansen did a brief eight-song set with no encore, an opening for Benatar that was far superior to the main attraction of the evening. The biggest cheer for Johansen occurred when it be-

came apparent that he was through for the night.

There is no obvious reason why Johansen shouldn't be favored by the hard-rock Z-92 folks because the once deliberately raw and primitive Dolls sound has been replaced by a Mick Taylor-era Stones style.

Johansen has been consistently moving towards the center during his solo career. He now makes conventional, although still fine records, yet the joke is on him unless he starts to sell a ton of albums.

Johansen played out all the required moves, such as mentioning Omaha and Nebraska innumerable times and dedicating "Girls" to the "fabulous Pat Benatar." Nevertheless the crowd remained noncommitted, which may be indicative of the fragmentation of the

rock and roll audience.

As a generalization, from "I Want to Hold Your Hand" until "Exile on Main Street," most young people listened to the same music. Then came an era when rock and roll seemed as extinct as dinosaurs; a time roughly spanning the year 1972 until the Bicentennial release of the Ramones first album. It kicked the whole punk/New Wave movement into high gear.

The key problem is that the mass audience, at least in the United States, has been divided into two mutually exclusive camps: pro and anti-New Wave. Most of Pat Benatar's fans wouldn't dream of listening to the Talking Heads, for instance.

Also leading to the dissipation of a unified rock culture was that a lot of college-oriented people bailed out altogether in exchange for more ethnic

forms of music. Punk landmark CBGB's initials originally stood for country, bluegrass, and blues. In Lincoln, for example, blues and reggae are heavily supported by collegiates.

All of those utterly faceless and bland groups, heard so often on FM radio, became the dominant brand of rock. Pat Benatar is more enjoyable than most of the fare. Granted, she is talented, yet she seems to lack any real inspiration.

Johansen, on the other hand, can't escape his past because the Dolls, along with Stooges, the MC5 and the Velvet Underground were the forerunners of the whole New Wave style. Unfortunately, Friday night Johansen was no more than competent, rather than inspired, which is a drag.

'Confessions': Serious, creative without the hype

By Chuck Lieurance

There is something initially bothersome about Ulu Grosbard's *True Confessions*. This feeling comes by looking at the careers of both Robert De Niro and Robert Duvall in retrospect. In their other roles (See Duvall in *The Great Santini* and *Apocalypse Now*; De Niro in *Raging Bull*, *Taxi Driver* and *The Godfather II*) these two actors have shown the ultimate in physical intensity, raging across the screen as men with repressed explosive anger.

movie review

In *True Confessions* the intensity is introspective, offering long moments of silence with only the battles of conscience and the bitter but often silent sibling rivalry between the priest (De Niro) and the homicide detective (Duvall).

Although this change of pace from the directing styles of Scorsese (*Taxi Driver* and *The Raging Bull*) and

Coppola (*The Godfather*, *The Godfather II* and *Apocalypse Now*) to the more restrained style of Ulu Grosbard is at first bothersome, the final effect is almost completely positive, showing De Niro and Duvall as two of the most versatile and innovative actors of our times.

Duvall and De Niro are far more than just personalities. They are major energy forces, and by putting them together in the same film it seems inevitable that they cancel themselves out. But De Niro and Duvall seem to enjoy the calm sincerity of their roles and they fall neatly into Grosbard's stylized world without creating the entropy that two other such forces might generate.

Normally, two names of this caliber on a poster could insure an audience one of two things; one, that the film is a multi-million dollar epic, or two, that it was just a studio's effort to recover from a summer of flops. *True Confessions* is certainly not an epic. It is a small film almost devoid of pretention into which two actors tired of being raw energy for directors like Scorsese and Coppola can blend nicely.

The film does not have an expensive sheen to it either, but instead there is the feel of many creative minds working within limitations (which is, believe it or not Hollywood, where artists tend to work best).

Neither could *True Confessions* redeem a summer of

box office disaster. It does not have the approach or the catharsis manipulation of a big hit.

There are destined to be some Oscar nominations of course. Almost certainly De Niro and Duvall will be competing against one another as they did in 1980 (De Niro for *The Raging Bull* and Duvall for *The Great Santini*), but this is not to say that their underplay performances deserve this reward. For once the personalities have not upstaged the film as a whole; the laudatory reviews should go to the film as a group effort.

True Confessions was taken from a novel by John Gregory Dunne and the screenplay was written by Dunne and his wife, Joan Didion (*The White Album* and *Play it as it Lays*). The script has immense periods of silence in which the only means of communication are De Niro's expressive eyes or the placement of the camera in relation to the actors.

After being reprimanded for sins of pride by an old mentor and fellow monsignor (well played by Burgess Meredith), De Niro as the politically-inclined priest Spellacy is seen walking in a garden for a long period of time completely in long shot, emphasizing his relative insignificance.

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