Chick Corea — in concert, on record, & in person

by Bob Reina

Live At The Orpheum, 3/28/75

Return to Forever and Orpheum put on a very interesting show at the Orpheum at the end of March. Unlike last year's Orpheum concert, the audience was completely packed and both bands were well received.

Orpheum opened the Orpheum concert with a very long set. They started the program with a very accurate reproduction of their best acoustic and electric mix from their latest album, "Let There Be Music," and grew heavier as the night wore on. The electric work they did near the end was impressive, especially the long blues jam featuring the wonderful double guitar work of John Hall and Larry Hopkins. Unfortunately, their album does not quite meet these high standards.

The crowd, of course, roared at the sight of Chick on stage. The band opened with a smooth melody of Stanley Clarke's "Daydream" and "Beyond the Seventh Galaxy" and didn't help being amazed how a band like Return to Forever could improve so much since their last Boston concert. As usual, Clarke was superhuman, and Lenny White is expanding increasingly into the bass guitarist's role.

Interestingly, the album seems sub-dued, as well as allowing more rock enthusiasts to become interested in his music. Chick is then featured on a "no mystery - the second extended solo rendition of "Vulcan Worlds" that I began to notice Al Di Meola's development of a personal style.

"There wasn't as much McLaughlin in his playing; he's still developing. An interesting and corny section emerges in the middle of the number. Chick would play a riff and each member of the band would attempt to duplicate it. At times it was hilarious and it showed just how tight the band can be.

The renditions of "No Mystery" and "Celebration Suite" were faithful to their recorded versions and brought a delightful change to the pace of the concert. The excess melody of "Jungle Waterfall" and "Lopsy Lu" (the latter from Corea's first solo album, "A "Waterfall" in the middle of the number. Chick would play a riff and each member of the band would attempt to duplicate it. At times it was hilarious and it showed just how tight the band can be.

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Return to Forever's "Myth" With the release of each Return to Forever album, Chick Corea experiments with new musical ideas. Home of the Seventh Galaxy was his first heavy electric album, "Where Have I Known You Before." Chick's music has been exploring so many types of music that Return to Forever no longer has one "sound." "I don't enjoy playing one kind of music because I can feel good playing music and if I just do what I'm doing about it, it comes out different. I'm trying to find a balance in life where I myself continue to be aware of the world that I'm living in and stay in contact with people and then after that how each individual can do it.

However, of his many musical styles, there is one that is close to his heart. "If I looked really closely and personally at what I myself enjoy, I'd enjoy playing very delicate acoustic music. But that's a very personal thing which I couldn't feel satistisfied for very long periods of time because it just concerns me in relation to myself.

Why is Chick_corea playing a hit single? "Jungle Waterfall" was really an experiment. For the first time I saw Chick_corea really do something that he felt was in the audience's interest. Let's do it and say we're going to do it. So I sat down and I said, "Okay, how can I do it?" Let's do it. Let's do it and then just wrote that piece."

Chick Corea, known as one of the world's greatest electric pianists, is a warm, friendly human being. Besides granting me the last-minute, un-scheduled interview, he made me feel all of the security and management handles that comforted me backstage at the Orpheum.

In the future Chick plans to tour until the middle of July, or whenever his next project will leave him performing only a few sporadic dates. He'll be back in New York before the summer is over, and in the fall, we can expect tours of Japan and the US, as well as a new album featuring pianist Gayle Moran.