King of the electric guitar

King Crimson at the Orpheum Theater, June 3, 1984

"Hey Joe," I think like this word started with Peter Green.

A King Crimson show is quite unlike the typical rock concert, even for fans jumping up and down, dancing and singing along with the band, there is the thick full of stunned people quietly watch- ing much like four old men physically abuse their musical instruments while the instruments loudly protest. And yet the result is incredible music.

Robert Fripp started the show alone, with just a guitar, an amp, and twice his weight in electronics. Unlike the show at the Metro two years ago, when Fripp sat crouched behind an amp and turned his back to the audience, this time he faced the crowd on a stool, though he spent most of the time looking at either the guitar or the dour-looking lead electricist, Bellew was the focus of most of the show. During "21st Century Schizoid Man," he was doing more to get some crowd involvement than at a few points. During "Indiscipline," after several minutes of Fripp playing, he an- nounced "Tonight I'm going to beat the nuts out of my guitar!" To the accompaniment of cheers, he changed his mind: "Well, maybe not."

The band played most of the tunes from Discipline, Boar, and Three of a Perfect Pair, as well as the title cut from Rats. A few of these, such as "I've Seen a meer Glaeber," were based on the original themes, with a few altered lyrics, but proved to be the best of the extended jams (I'm not complain- ing).

King Crimson has been described as the most mathematical band around today. After watching some of the proceedings (full of intricate passages and unexpected sectional changes performed live with deadly accura- cacy), I am inclined to agree with this. Nonetheless, the music changes rapidly enough to sound like a sequenced synthesizer electronope.

My roommate says, "There are two parts to playing electric guitar. You have to be able to play the guitar, and you have to be able to play the electric." The members of Crimson very definitely have a command of the electric. There were a few disturbing moments during the concert when I was hearing sounds that had no right to be coming from any of the instruments that I could see. Even more alarming was the "hands-off" guitar trick. Be- lew's guitar was sitting on a stand, and he was playing with a set of controls mounted on the mid stool. He then walked over the guitar, and lightly touched the strings down by the bridge. The guitar then broke into a feedback solo by itself, and as far as I could tell no one had set it in motion. I think Belew grew a look that seemed to say "Not bad." Between numbers, the audience surged back to life with several standing ovations.

After this, Bellew announced that the first new Bellew was joining Fripp on a stand for a "Discipline." The second was the only time all night that all the audience danse, (at Bellew's suggestion), to "Elephant Talk."

It's pretty hard to convey the feeling of awe that comes along with a King Crimson concert. If you appreciate the music on their records, you owe it to yourself to see them live. Every time they come around, even if I have to once again miss seeing my friends gradua- te while waiting in line for tickets.

Sam Joseph Czik

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