Cheap Trick’s Lap of Luxury tour comes after long dry spell

CHEAP TRICK
Orpheum Theatre, Boston. With House of Lords.
Special Appearance by Joe Perry and Steve Tyler.
Thursday, February 2.

By ALFRED ARMENDARIZ
and STEVE FULFER

A
ger of UN DRY SPELL, a commercial comeback can bring new energy to a band’s live performance and attract new fans.

Cheap Trick played at the Orpheum Theatre. Cheap Trick is touring in support of their platinum album Lap of Luxury. They played a spirited set composed of songs from earlier albums and many songs off of Lap of Luxury. Thursday’s show was one of the best live shows the Orpheum has hosted in recent months, as the veteran rockers kept the crowd screaming and on their feet for the entire 90 minutes.

Cheap Trick has ridden the roller coaster of success over their 12-year career. They enjoyed a brief platinum period in the late seventies and had a top 10 hit in 1979 with “I Want You To Want Me.” However, in the eighties they went through personnel changes and lost their previous popularity. They were sentenced to a life of endless touring behind albums that sold only a fraction of the amount of their earlier material.

Lap of Luxury is Cheap Trick’s first platinum album since their 1980 release Dream Police. With heavy airplay on both MTV and radio, “The Flame”, the first single off the album, became their first #1 song in America. Guitarist Rick Nielsen, singer Robin Zander, and drummer Bun E. Carlos reunited with bassist Tom Petersson and singer Robin Zander, and drummer Bun E. Carlos and Petersson set down a strong beat that backed Zander’s colorful vocals and Nielsen’s playful guitar. Petersson played the 12-string bass guitar melodically, giving the band a solid base while taking counter melodies to Nielsen’s lead. Zander switched back and forth between acoustic and 6- and 12-string guitars as he played rhythm parts to most of the songs. The raucous three guitar sound of Nielsen/ Zander/Petersson brought intensity to opener “Just Got Back” and precision to their latest hit “Ghost Town.” They went on to play 5 more songs off of Lap of Luxury, including the electric “Let Go” and their hits “Don’t Be Cruel” and “The Flame.” However, the crowd really exploded when they performed their classic hits “Dream Police”, “I Want You To Want Me”, “Ain’t That A Shame”, and “Clock Strikes Ten.” Tom Petersson sang lead vocals on “I Know What I Want” and played a solo introduction to “California Man” that showed off his first-rate musicianship.

Guitarist Nielsen kept in constant communication with the crowd as he introduced songs and reached out to touch screaming fans. Midway through the first half he even gave a commentary as to the state of music in America. He asked the crowd, “How many of you watch MTV?” After hearing the loud crowd response he asked “Why?!” and continued “You watch it to see groups like Aerosmith, INXS, and Cheap Trick.” The crowd answered with a loud “Yeah!” He went on, “But Tiffany and Debbie Gibson should go back to K-Mart right now! They’ve played some bad music before but that stuff is just... awful.”

The big surprise of the evening came at the encore when, after playing their classic anthem “Surrender”, Rick Nielsen asked “two friends” from back stage to join them. Joe Perry and Steve Tyler from Aerosmith jumped on stage. They jammed through a blustering rendition of “Train Kept A Rollin’” and a medley of the Rolling Stones’ hits “It’s All Over Now” and “The Last Time.” Tyler sang lead vocals and both Perry and Nielsen gave roars of solos. The energy of the concert showed that Cheap Trick is ready to bring back their style of rock and restablish themselves as the popular group they once were.

Marek Janowski directs pleasant, risk-free program

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

By JULIAN WEST

HE BOSTON SYMPHONY was fortunate to recover from the cancelation of one conductor of international stature, Giuseppe Sinopoli, who was originally scheduled for the evening, was dropped after Sinopoli’s cancellation. Janowski, noted as a Wagnerian conductor, quite naturally wished to select pieces from his own repertoire, and the Wagner preludes are a required part of the repertoire of any major orchestra. Yet without the Strauss, the evening lacked weight. Schumann’s melodic Rheinische Symphony created the pleasant sensation of floating down the Rhine, a sort of less-exalted Water Music. Surely directed and excellently performed, the piece nevertheless sounded somewhat clichéd. And, although Janowski evoked confidence and stability from the podium, some of the movements did suffer from tempo problems.

With the Wagner, both Janowski and the BSO seemed to be on more familiar ground. The prelude to Die Meistersinger received a textbook performance, although again it sounded fast throughout. The evening’s highlight was the prelude to Tristan and Isolde, which was performed with great expression and feeling. The “Liebesedel” was performed without a soprano, but the darkness underscores the vocal line and was effectively captured. Aside from the intrusive dissonance of the final few bars, the music built to an effective and moving climax, rounding out a thoroughly pleasant, if unadventurous and risk-free, evening.