Phish members join Dude of Life in hybrid concert

THE DUDE OF LIFE

By John Jacobs

The Dude of Life played at the Paradise last Thursday. No, wait a minute — Phish played at the Paradise last Thursday. Um, no, that’s not quite right, either...

Actually, it was a hybrid beast of a band that took the stage that night. Phish drummer Jon Fishman was already on-stage as the Dude’s drummer and it was revealed before the show that Phish guitarist Trey Anastasio would join them.

Those rumors turned out to be true. When Trey took the stage, the audience went wild with excitement. It was like a small hurricane of flannel, dotted with prep school caps and “I like Live or is it Dead?” T-shirts.

The Dude’s band and Trey played a few songs before they were joined by Phish bassist Mike Gordon, whose appearance took the crowd completely by surprise. The introductions were singed the optimal crowd reaction, and the crowd did react. The air tinged with energy and excitement. With three-quarters of Phish present, the Dude of Life launched into “I Don’t Care About Anybody But Me.”

Although Trey stayed for the whole set, Mike left after his third numbers. His replacement, the Dude of Life’s bassist, missed more traditional basslines, but redeemed himself by singing the band’s cover of “Respect” by Aretha Franklin.

The Dude himself was kind of a dark. With his top hat and his gold-trimmed red cape, he bore an uncanny resemblance to both Slash and the evil prince from The Princess Bride. Besides singing poorly, the Dude does not play any instruments. This means that he has nothing to do while the instrumentalists solo. Nothing, that is, except look more like a dark by nodding or shaking his head to the beat of the song.

Supposedly, at the Dude’s concert in North Hampton, he corded himself by wearing stockings, a green dress, a top hat, and goggles. At that concert, he threw rubber slugs and a rubber pig into the crowd. The audience at the Paradise had to settle for rubber chicken, which he tossed with us first.

The Dude’s primary strength is purported to be as a lyricist. He wrote the words to “Dinner and a Movie” and “Flathead,” both cuts from Phish’s June album. However, the lyrics for “Dinner and a Movie” consist entirely of one joke: “Let’s go out to dinner and see a movie.” At the Paradise, the Dude came out as lyrically insane. His songs betrayed a twisted sense of humor, not the kind of humor to bond to an audience with.

Because of Trey’s presence, the Dude’s backup band had a hard to appraise. They couldn’t seem to blend with Trey’s guitar solo’s, and Trey seemed to have no desire to match their less jazzy style. The resultant lack of coherence left the music less satisfying than it could have been.

The Dude’s guitarist was good, in spite of his penchant for Phish-like off-key solos. The keyboardist, however, was exceptionally bad. He forced the band to let him solo, then sounded horrible. The band actually cut his solo short and did not encourage him to solo again.

The set list included “Lucy in the Subway with Daffodils,” “She’s Bitchin’ Again,” and “Family Picture.” The band also covered the Beatles’ “Sexy Sadie” (which he performed very well), “Respect,” Steppenwolf’s “Liven After Midnight” (kind of the same), and James Brown’s “I Feel Good.”

The show turned out to be pretty good, though there’s no telling how it would have gone if the Dude of Life had had to stand on its own, without Trey Anastasio or Mike Gordon. On the other hand, the show with Trey and Mike could have been better with a little rehashing.

If you’re going to see the Dude of Life, see them where Phish won’t let them fall flat, like...