

Princess premieres *Stop Making Sense*

Stop Making Sense
Directed by Jonathan Demme
Princess Theatre, March 9-15

review by Geoffrey Jackson

Two weeks ago in Vancouver I finally got to see the Talking Heads concert film, *Stop Making Sense*. How did I like it? I liked it so much I went back the very next night dragging a friend in tow. Now that this movie is finally coming here I intend to drag all of my other friends down to the Princess so they too can enjoy David Byrne and his superhuman crew.

A great deal of the credit for this film has to go to Jonathan Demme for realizing that the Talking Heads on stage were so theatrical that to use rapid-editing, split-screen, or any of the other tricks in the video repertoire would just be superfluous. His camerawork records and subtly underlines the originality and spirit of the show yet never tries to upstage the performance.

And such a performance. When David Byrne first appears, acoustic guitar in one hand, a ghetto-blasters in the other, he looks like a lad in search of a talent competitor; just a single figure in the centre of a large and naked stage. The ghetto blaster hammers out a stiff insistent rhythm, his guitar kicks into a nervous stutter, and we're into a no-frills rendition of *Psycho Killer*. Great stuff.

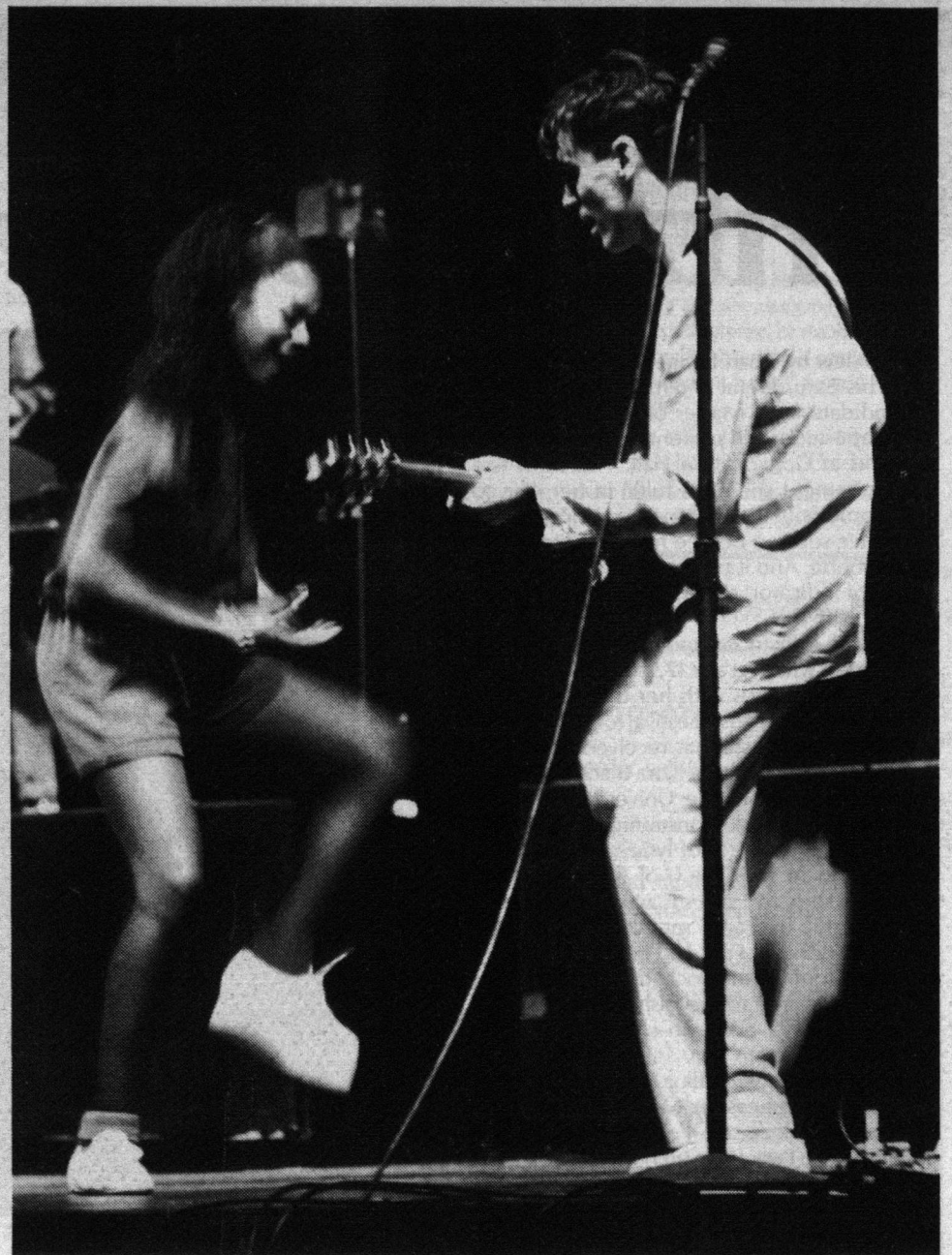
While he is playing, a group of black-clad stage hands (a la Kubuki theatre) role out a riser, and Tina Weymouth appears with her bass. As they progress through the set, playing first all the old songs and then moving forward through the career of the band, more and more equipment is rolled out. Chris Franz gets behind his drum kit. Jerry Harrison picks up his guitar, then more singers, another keyboard player, another percussionist, another guitar player.

In effect you get to see the band created right before you. A naked stage is transformed into a complex performance environment with risers, ingenious lighting, and a large projection screen backing it all.

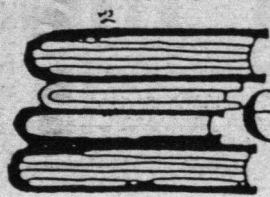
At the centre of this wonderful circus is David Byrne. Chameleon-like he transforms himself into a new character for each song. At times he seems innocent and romantic, at

other moments he becomes a greasy lounge-lizard; a sort of Bing Crosby crossed with Norman Bates. His penultimate incarnation is in the Big Suit, an extremely clever costume that at once seems to parade rock pretensions while at same time presenting something ominous and threatening.

My favourite song in the movie is called "This Must Be The Place." Through the use of a single floor lamp and few back projections of bookshelves, Byrne creates instantly the ambience of an urban home. The song, a subtle and simple hymn of praise for love and home, is both warm and intelligent, thoughtful and romantic. During the instrumental at the end of the song, Byrne manages to dance with the floor lamp, transforming it into the symbol and object of his romantic reveres. It is an exquisite bit of movement, simple in its essence but done with such style and verve that I could not help but smile every time I saw it. This weekend I am looking forward to seeing David Byrne sing and dance once more at the Princess.



David Byrne (seen at right with Lynn Mabry): Bing Crosby crossed with Norman Bates.



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