

Bobby bops and bounces

by Jerome Ryckborst

We waited, last Tuesday night, for one hell of a show. We knew, all 500 of us in the Arden Theatre, that Bobby McFerrin could deliver.

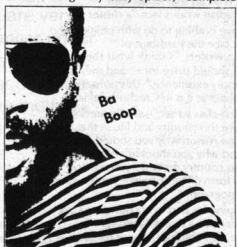
Is it boring when you know what to expect? No way!

On stage, McFerrin sings, and he makes noises: with the microphone on his neck, with his lips, tongue, hands, feet, and vocal chords, he is a one-man music machine. He even managed to produce two notes simultaneously.

McFerrin started out slowly, teasing the audience with a lazy-paced song of welcome. Then the floodgates broke as he brought down the biggest barrier: audience inhibition.

We sang, McFerrin started us out slowly, with a "shoo-shoo" whispered refrain, but soon had us roaring along.

"Turn up the houselights," McFerrin said, and he was off nimbly climbing through the audience ("this place has no ables!") making a beeline for one little girl in the middle. She and he sang "Itsy Bitsy Spider," complete



with hand motions. Then we all sang it, looking like a pentecostal congregation, everybody waving arms and wiggling fingers.

People were invited on stage, people danced, people sang. One young woman upstaged McFerrin with her moves, but he asked for it. "I won't sing unless someone comes up to dance," he said. He started with "Thinking about your body," then stopped and said that "Thinking" without the dance is like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" without the hands.

McFerrin performed "Suzie Q," his 501 Levis ad, "Blackbird" and many spontaneously improvised tunes. Most of these were probably one-of-a-kind, never to be repeated.

Says McFerrin: "Records are good because you can say: 'I like that song' and play it 100-million times, but things [on stage] that happen only once, you have to bring them up from inside and I think that's incredibly special."

This concert was special: alternating between slow and break-neck paces.

The closing number — a compilation from *The Wizard of Oz* — was an incredible example of what McFerrin and his microphone can do. He played all the parts. Bobby went hurtling across the stage in the tornado (sound effects extraordinaire), landed on the witch ("Ding-dong, the witch is dead") scooting off to Oz ("Follow the, follow the, follow the Yellow Brick Road") and finally killing the Wicked Witch of the West with a bottle of Perrier (water kills wicked witches, remember!).

McFerrin's vocal dexterity is amazing. His voice does it all: trumpets, lovers, munchkins. He even sings both parts of a duet.

Oh, and for the encore: "And now it's time to say goodbye to all our company, 'M-I-C,' 'K-E-Y' 'M-O-U-S-E.'" Bye Bobby. Come back soon.



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