

## Billy Idol proves he still has it at the Grandstand



Billy Idol is so happy about his CNE show that he could just spit.



by T.J. Gillespie

Although the response wasn't as monumental as it was on the Rebel Yell tour a few years ago, a crowd of 18,000 cheered and screamed nonetheless for one of the enduring rock performers of our time. Billy Idol has returned to the concert stage on the Charmed Life tour, a circuit that takes him across Canada and through the United States.

This support tour for the album of the same name is not only necessary to boost lagging album sales, but I get the feeling that this is the first tour that Idol is really doing for himself. There was much skepticism about whether Idol could handle the rigors of touring, after all that has happened (yes, we all know about that nasty motorcycle accident and I'm not going to give you all the details; enough has already been written about that), but Billy Idol seems to be doing just fine.

The stage was an ethereally lit and elaborately constructed masterpiece which included painted figures, patterned floors, a billowing black sheet and a

huge looming skull hanging overhead. Idol emerged from the concealed door, dry ice o'plenty and cane in hand. Though the cane serves a purpose — in that it helps him stand up — its phallic symbology certainly adds a little something to the whole show.

Idol kicked off the first set with songs from the new album, and commented on the fact that MuchMusic has banned the video for "Cradle of Love," his first single. He continued with "Soul Standing By," from Whiplash Smile and the very popular early hit, "White Wedding."

It's true, he doesn't jump around as much as he used to, but you have to give him credit all the same. It wasn't what you would call a spectacular show, but it was certainly worth the cost of the ticket.

The highlight of the show was the slow ballad "Sweet Sixteen," which followed quickly into a rockin' set which featured The Doors' cover "L.A. Woman," complete with a larger than life blow-up doll. Next came "Mony

" and "Rebel Yell," which saw Billy get up to his old antics.

After a fan threw a pretty dull white bra onto the stage, he threw it back commenting that "even his Mum wouldn't wear" something like that. A black lace bra suddenly was hurled, and Idol stuffed that one in his pocket.

The show drew to a close, and as the crowd awaited the rocker's return, the overhead skull was eerily bathed in red and blue light. When he did return, he went into a self-pity kick, saying that some people have told him to pack it in, and that he'd be better off six feet under. The crowd gave a glowing response that indicated their distress over such a thought, which prompted Idol to say "Thanx Toronto, I won't forget it."

The show ended with "To Be A Lover," the singer obviously exhausted. Much to my dismay, he didn't perform "Hot in the City" or "Dancing With Myself," but Billy Idol did a great job. All things considered, I guess he really does lead a Charmed Life.

## Hart offers weird and wonderful pop

by Hugh Hardy

Prologue: Concerts are temporal. They are mere points in time when an audience communes with a

performer to produce an EMOTIONAL EFFECT. To the nostalgia-mongering goofballs who have marred my memory of Grant Hart's otherwise great show, I say fuck you. Your misguided iconoclastic attitudes will never amount to anything more than a Mason jar full of paisley shit.

Guitars a' crunchin' and appendages a' flailin', support act Run Westy Run took command... and proceeded to bore the hell out of me for what seemed like a nine hour marathon set. As an nth generation Minneapolis hardcore act, the Westy's are adding very little to the sum of accumulated human knowledge.

Their Placematish musical shemozal of hardcore, blues, country, and the kitchen sink comes across as stiff, forced, and somewhat obnoxiously contrived. That precious (but false) aura of clumsy innocence surrounding bands like the Replacements is somehow their trademark.

All the ripped jeans, worn t-shirts, and cheap black high-tops in the world aren't going to do it for these guys. "Jack the Hammer" be damned. I call this being too self-conscious in an attempt to appear infinitely unselfconscious. Colour me unimpressed (cue: rimshot)

Between sets, I was watching the stage intently, daydreaming about all those amps and guitars up there that I CAN'T OWN, when something struck me as odd about one of the roadies. Strangely clean-cut and shaven, in a sort-of-bowling shirt, but unmistakably the knucklescraper frame of Grant Hart.

Everyone was there to worship him, but it seemed that no one in the joint realized that he was the guy lugging the amplifiers around, taping down cords, and doing soundchecks. This guy

really cared about what he was doing. At the risk of sounding corny, there WAS something oddly touching about the moment he picked up his beat up, bestickered Jazzmaster which, when he gave it that first thrum, sounded like a car accident.

But what a three car pile-up Nova Mob was! Bassist Tom Merkill (or Murko, I couldn't tell over the P.A.) closed his eyes and slipped into his own little world as he slapped and plucked, his entire body swaying fluidly with the beat. His melodic bass lines seemed to harness Hart's brittle guitar sound and prevent the mix from seeping. Mike Kregos's mallet work was reminiscent of — dare I say it — Maureen Tucker on the Velvet's "All Tomorrow's Parties" or (gasp!) "Heroin".

Hart is apparently a self-taught guitarist. I gathered this from the odd finger patterns of his chording. Strangely enough, it seems that his relative naivety on the instrument may have saved the day. His unconventional chord patterns created both weird and wonderful POP (no, I didn't stutter) songs. Hart has as natural a feel for the pure sound of the guitar as he did the drums.

As for the *Last Days of Pompeii*, I can't really comment upon its lyrical worth. One concert run-through does not provide the opportunity for scrutiny that repeated album listenings do. My commentary would be worthless.

There were no high-minded motifs or reprises in this "rock opera," just a simple series of songs (though they did run through "Admiral of the Air" twice, simply because Hart didn't feel it was good enough the first time). Helped along by Hart's beautifully hoarse vocals, the songs did create a certain mood of desperation. The recorded piece, if done right (and that's a BIG if) will be something to look forward to.

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