

Reviews

Ratt has fun despite small crowd

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

My, oh my, how the rock 'n' roll tables can turn.

Three and a half years ago, I saw a struggling little band from New Jersey open for Ratt, one of the L.A. bands who had just burst onto the scene.

Three weeks ago, I watched as that once struggling New Jersey band, Bon Jovi, played in front of 17,000 people at the Summit in Houston.

Last Sunday, Ratt played in Houston. Did they get to play the prestigious Summit? No — they were relegated to Sam Houston Coliseum, a dumpy box of an arena.

Did they fill the box? Nope — they only drew a crowd of 4,000 to a venue that was set up to hold 6,500 (and this was with two of hard rock's rising stars, Britny Fox and Kix, on the bill with Ratt).

I've got to hand it to the boys in Ratt, however. From the looks on their faces, and from the way they played, you'd think they were in front of a sell-out crowd.

They were loose and playful and apparently pretty darn happy up on stage.

Part of the band's attitude was probably drawn from the Coliseum itself, which must have reminded the band members of the rowdy, dingy, clubs they played in the early days.

Instead of pesky ushers wandering through the crowd making kids put out their cigarettes, the Coliseum offered concessions workers who went through the crowd with buckets of iced-down beer, selling to just about anyone who could speak and cough up \$2.75 a can.

As soon as Ratt came on, the neat rows of folding metal chairs disappeared as the crowd surged toward the stage, moving, crushing or tossing any chairs in their way.

Unfortunately, this mild anarchy interfered with the performance at one point. Three songs into the show, someone threw a beer can that struck vocalist Stephen Pearcy in the chest.

Pearcy was not amused. He began flipping off the person who threw the beer, and pointed at him and gestured for security guards to toss the guy out.

That really was a shame, because everything had started off so well. The band hit the stage with "City to City," a melodic rocker from their latest album. They were clad mostly in black leather, with Pearcy projecting a swashbuckling pirate image, with a black bandana over his long, curly jet-black hair and dangling silver earrings.

Special effects were kept to a minimum. The music was the show. Selections performed included "Slip of the Lip," "Morning After," "You're In Love," "Back for More," and a rousing version of "What's It Gonna Be?" The set ended with "Way Cool, Jr." minus the distinctive sax solo that closes out the studio version of the song.

After a three-minute delay, the band came back for an encore of "You Think You're Tough" and their first hit, "Round and Round."

Throughout the show, Pearcy interacted well with guitarists Warren De Martini and Robbin Crosby and bassist Juan Croucier. The frail-looking De Martini, who in the past has looked sick on stage, was in fine form and added impromptu extended guitar solos to several songs, most effectively during "Lay It Down."

He brandished several guitars, including one bearing the Latin version of the phrase "Too fast to live, too young to die" (the phrase was taken from a James Dean tribute T-shirt).

Since the band seemed to be having such a good time, it seemed kind of strange that they only played for an hour and a half. Several well-known songs, including "Dance" and "Body Talk," two popular songs from the *Dancin' Undercover* album, were omitted.

What made this stranger was the fact that this tour supposedly was going to be spontaneous, with the band adding songs at will on good nights.

This was not really the case. "Things are pretty much set now," drummer Bobby Blotzer said. "We have to stick to the songs that the crew has a lighting program for (the lighting for each song is controlled by a program run through a computer)."

So you can't just throw a Led Zepplin song into the middle of the set? "No, but I'd like to," said Blotzer with a laugh.

Stephen Pearcy did not make an appearance in the hallways after the show, but that was perhaps because he had other things on his mind. At one point during the show, he stood atop a stack of speakers at the corner of the stage and surveyed the crowd. He spotted four scantily-clad female audience members perched on a railing by the side of the stage.

He gestured to a roadie who was standing at the bottom of the speaker stack, held up four fingers, and pointed at the girls. The roadie strolled over to them and handed each one an after-show backstage pass.

Like I said, the band was having fun.

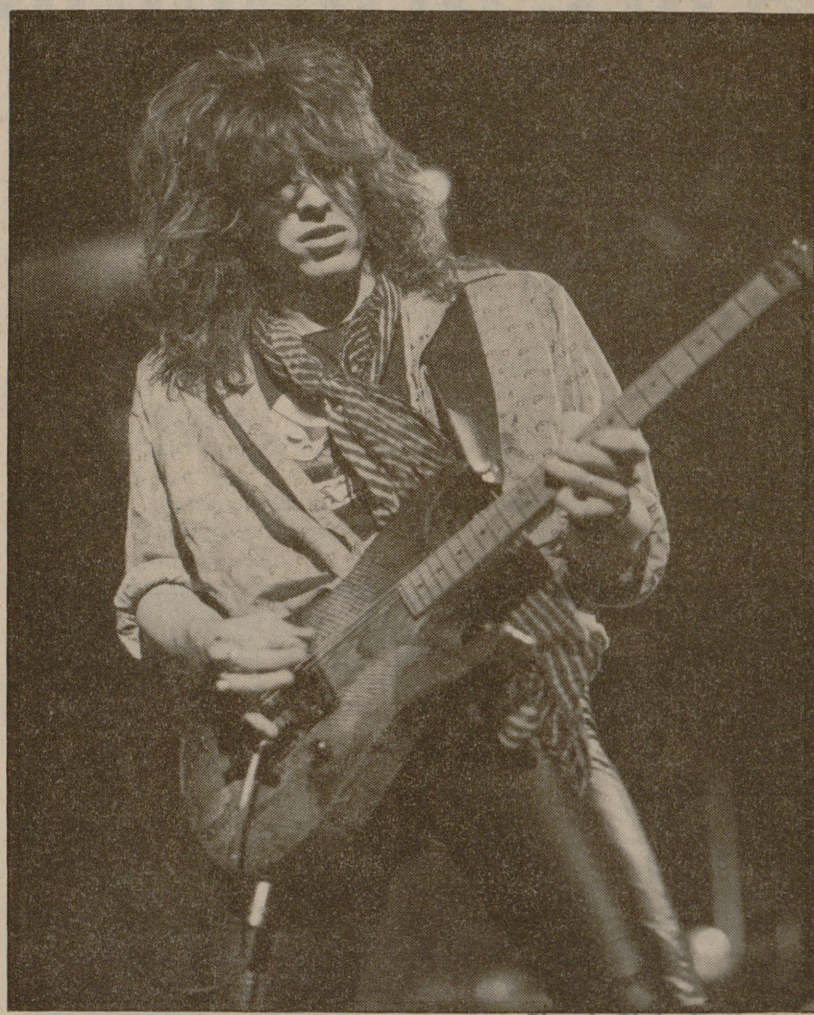


Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Ratt guitarist Warren Di Martini performs a solo during a concert at the Sam Houston Coliseum last weekend.

Kix vocalist says band ready for new success

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

Kix is a band on the rise. After being together for 10 years and putting out four albums on Atlantic Records, the first three of which did not exactly put Kix's name on the musical map, this band from Maryland is finally getting national recognition.

Their latest release, *Blow My Fuse*, has spawned two hit songs, "Cold Blood" and the title track, whose videos have become regulars on MTV's most-requested lists. These popular videos have helped to propel *Blow My Fuse* into *Billboard* magazine's Top 100, and were instrumental in getting the band a spot on the Ratt/Britny Fox national tour.

Kix's vocalist, Steve Whiteman, is not your typical hard-rock band frontman. Besides handling the vocal chores, Whiteman takes it upon himself to act as a sort of rock 'n' roll master of ceremonies when the band plays live. He injects wit and humor into the between-song banter, which for most bands usually consists of one stupid cliché after another.

"Yeah, there were times. But we just stuck with our guns, and it paid off."

"You guys' career is really taking off now. What's the most visible sign of it finally happening?"

"This arena tour; it's been incredible."

"What do you think was the main reason for this sudden success?"

"We hired a new management company, and they were a lot better at representing us to the record company. Radio's been real good at giving us exposure, and so has MTV."

"How have Ratt and Britny Fox been to work with?"

"Real good. They're all regular guys. They come hang out in our dressing room. Last night we had a night off, so we all went out partying."

"You had 30 songs to choose from to put on *Blow My Fuse*. Are you going to have that luxury for the next album?"

"I don't know, we're not even thinking about the next album yet. We're not legally bound to put one out in a certain period of time, so we'll take our time. We won't just put out a piece of s---."

"When you play live, you inject a little humor into your between-song speeches."

"Yeah, I'm not gonna get up there like a bunch of other bands do and just say stuff like 'Are you ready to rock?' That's such bulls---. Of course they (the audience members) want to rock. What else are they there for? They're not gonna say 'No, we want to be mellow.'"

"How have the Texas crowds been?"

"Really good. They've been goin' nuts when we play 'Blow My Fuse' and 'Cold Blood.'"

"Sounds like you guys are enjoying yourselves."

"Oh yeah, this isn't a job yet. We're still having fun."

Cheap Trick out of place but show not inadequate

By Had Binion

CORRESPONDENT

Something about the smell of cow dung in the air and the sight of cowboys and cowgirls sporting tight-fitting, starched Wranglers makes you wonder what Cheap Trick is doing playing at a rodeo.

I thought the same thing as they took the stage in the Astrodome at their Feb. 22 performance at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Acoustics is definitely not a word that comes to mind when you think of the Astrodome, since it sounds like they're talking into a mine shaft in there. Cheap Trick was no exception to the rule. In fact, it took two songs before I could figure out what they were doing.

The band, lead guitarist Rick Nielsen, lead vocalist Robin Zander, bass guitarist Tom Petersson and drummer Bun E. Carlos hit the Astrodome's revolving stage with all of the antics that made them popular in the late '70s and early '80s.

The wall of sound provided by eight guitar amp stacks (eight guitar amp stacks?) might have sounded good to them, but by the time it reached the crowd, it was a cluttered mass of confusion.

Rick Nielsen, with his baseball cap and foolish expressions, did most of the talking for the band, mainly to announce the next song.

Robin Zander looked embarrassed to be playing at a rodeo and the only thing he said all night was "I want you to want me!" a phrase made famous on the band's "Live at Budokan" album.

They ripped through their 13-song set with ease, spitting out the songs that Cheap Trick fans know best: "Dream Police" (complete with lyrics changed to include something about the Astrodome), "I Want You to Want Me," "California Man" and some of the newer songs like "Ghost Town" and "The Flame."

About halfway through the performance, the vocal chores were turned over to Petersson for "I Know What I Want." Petersson, who was dressed like a cross between Slash of Guns-n-Roses fame and the local undertaker, should have stayed off the mike. His voice was off-key and he

looked like he was in too much of a daze to be singing.

Immediately after the song Petersson treated the crowd to an interesting solo on his 12-string bass guitar, an instrument that's rarely seen but provides a new sound.

Nielsen countered with a solo of his own that sounded more like guitar vomit. Though he is quite a showman and a good rock-and-roll guitar player, Nielsen's playing in no way compares to the fiery acrobatics of Eddie Van Halen or the soulful blends of bluesman Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Carlos did an excellent job of drumming in his usual disinterested style. But the chubby, balding drummer, who is known for chain smoking while playing, wasn't sporting any smokes that night.

Nielsen also managed to change to a different guitar after every song. He had guitars in every shape and size, including one modeled after him, his legs being the neck of the guitar and his chest and head being the body. He even had a five-necked model that looked like it weighed about 500 pounds.

The crowd of more than 17,000 came alive with whoops and screams as the band got into some of their later material. Robin Zander's vocals, which are always good, were especially inspiring during their rendition of Elvis' "Don't Be Cruel."

"The screams only got louder on the tender ballad 'The Flame' when everyone raised their lighted cigarette lighters to give the dome a soft glow. This song was perplexing — although there were a lot of nice keyboard parts, there was no keyboard player."

I can only guess that someone was playing them from behind the stage. It's annoying that some bands need musicians off stage as well as on.

Cheap Trick reminds me of Kiss — they've been around for a long time because they constantly change their style to match the trends of the times. The idea obviously works.

The teenage girls sitting behind me put it best when they said: "Well it's not Def Leppard, but it will do."

Fish

(Continued from page 13)

Ray recently obtained some frontosa, African fish from deep within the same lakes as the cichlids, around 300 feet below the surface.

"They're really hard to get because they have to come up in decompression chambers, and they're hard to breed too," he said. "It takes three or four years for them to get used to the new environment and breed."

"Just the babies go for \$20-\$30, and a full breeding pair can go for \$400-\$500."

However, the frontosa bear 100-150 offspring at a time. Ray said he never has managed to breed frontosa successfully — he acquired his by trading three of his recently-bred puppies for seven freshly-hatched fish.

Building a Tank
Putting a tank together isn't as difficult as many think, said Terrazas, who is writing a research paper on the topic. He uses a wet/dry filtration system in his aquarium and said that it requires no maintenance.

If you're planning to start your own aquarium, he recommends going to a full-service store, and suggests the following:

- Buy a tank that holds no less than 30 gallons (for saltwater).

- Use an under-gravel filter which is less expensive than a wet/dry filter.

- Buy a strong, submersible pump with a power head. The power head helps to keep the water clear and chemically balanced.

Carolyn Wheeler, a junior environmental design major, recently started a saltwater tank, and she still waits water to be ready.

It takes some time for the appropriate bacteria to build up in the water and gravel, at least three months, but she said she is looking forward to getting her first tropical pets.

"I can hardly wait until it's ready and I can put some really cool fish in it," she said.

Terrazas recommended to books to look into if you're interested in seeing the available fish and corals: *The Encyclopedia of Marine Fish and Marine Invertebrates in the Aquarium*.

Several stores in town can help you set up a tank. Some of them will come to your home, set the tank up and maintain it every month. The pet stores in town with aquarium setups are:

- Pet Paradise, 693-4575, 4202E Texas Avenue South (near Kroger)
- Animal World, 822-9315, Manor East Mall, Bryan
- Aquarium Concepts, 776-7887, 1863 Briarcrest Drive, Bryan
- Hardy Gardens, 776-5557, 2004 E. Villa Maria, Bryan

Previews

Artfest open competition

Entries for the Visual Arts Committee's annual Artfest are due by 3 p.m. Friday in the MSC Gallery.

The winning entries will be on display March 6-31 in the Gallery.

The entry fee is \$4 per entry, with a limit of 4 entries. Winners from past competitions may not enter.

Gallery Coordinator Lucy Monte said students from all majors are invited to participate.

"We want to expose and honor artistic talent at A&M, and it's an opportunity for the students' work to be shown and get some public reaction," Monte said.

Competition categories are: painting, drawing, sculpture, mixed media, crafts and photography.

Ribbons will be given for Best of Show, first, second and third places and honorable mention in each division. Prize money also will be awarded, she said, but the amount has not yet been determined.

Chuck Cooper, director of Air Gallery in Austin, will judge the entries Saturday. Winners will be announced at 7:30 p.m. Monday in the MSC Flag Room.

Texas independence festival

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park will have a celebration to commemorate Texas' independence from Mexico on Sunday from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

The Houston Pops will perform a free concert and the original Lone Ranger, Clayton Moore, also will be at the park.

The Texas Army and Brazoria Militia will camp behind the museum and will give demonstrations with a cannon. Some members of the

army will be dressed as Sam Houston and other signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence.

The park also plans to offer food booths, a Texas birthday cake and square dancing and clogging demonstrations.

To reach Washington-on-the-Brazos, go south on Highway 6 to Navasota, then take Highway 105 West to FM 1155 Washington-on-the-Brazos. The museum is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is free.

Modern Don Juan play

"Johnny Tenorio," a tragicomic play examining the Don Juan myth in modern times, will be performed by the Hispanic Group Theater Thursday at 7 p.m. in Rudder Theater.

The performance will be the first play produced by the group, which is a division of the Committee for Awareness of Mexican-American Culture.

"Tenorio" playwright Carlos Morton will lead a question and answer session in Rudder Theater after the performance about the play and its meanings. Morton is considered to be one of the foremost Mexican-

American playwrights.

Set in the west side of San Antonio, the play's dialogue will be spoken partly in English and partly in Spanish.

Despite the mix of languages, Roberto Villarreal, who plays Johnny Tenorio, said the play can be easily understood.

"Someone who is fluent in English and knows very little Spanish, or someone who is fluent in Spanish but knows little English can follow the play," he said.

Tickets for the play are \$1 and will be available outside Rudder Theater before the performance.

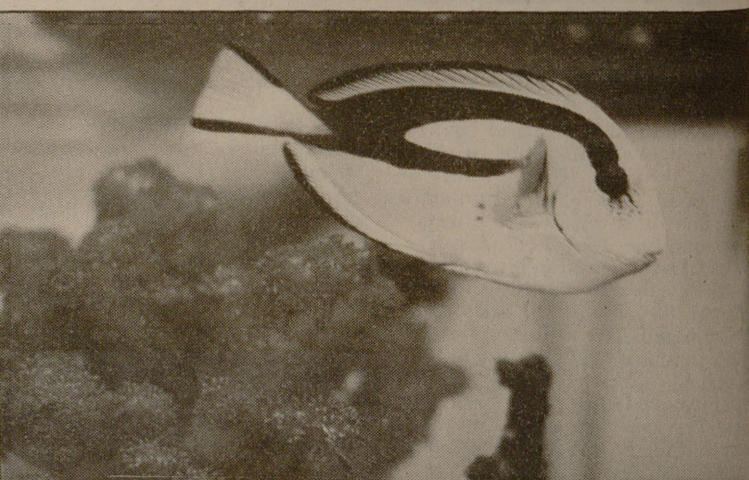


Photo by Chuck Squariglia

A blue tang swims in front of a piece of elegant coral at Pet Paradise. The fish is indigenous to the South Pacific Ocean.