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Review: Bryan Ferry rolls out Roxy Music tunes at Fox

By Jim Harrington jharrington@bayareanewsgroup.com

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Bryan Ferry on stage during the opening night of the Coachella Music and Arts Festival in Indio, Calif., on Friday, April 11, 2014. (Brian van der Brug/Los Angeles Times/MCT) (Brian van der Brug)

Bryan Ferry delivered a dream night for local Roxy Music fans.

The always-dapper crooner, who has peddled everything from 1920s jazz and the Great American Songbook to Bob Dylan covers and his own new compositions in recent years, decided to focus on his regal Roxy Music catalog during his concert Monday at the ornate Fox Theater in Oakland.

The result was an amazing evening of song -- as stunningly diverse as it was cohesive -- serving as further proof that Roxy Music deserves to be enshrined in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The 20-song set spanned the entire Roxy catalog, from 1972's groundbreaking eponymous debut to 1982's elegant swan song "Avalon." Yet, it was more than just a stroll down Memory Lane -- it was also a showcase of all the ways that Roxy Music influenced popular music.

It's hard to name many acts that have had a wider impact. During its 11-year recording career, the British band pioneered so many different subgenres of rock -- from glam to art to prog to experimental -- and helped pave the way for



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punk, New Wave and disco. It even had an impact on electronic music and hip-hop.

The evidence could be heard throughout Ferry's roughly 90-minute set, which got off to a quick start with the manic art-rock number "Re-Make/Re-Model" (from the first Roxy Music record) and then continued to flip through the genres like a deck of cards.

Backed by a versatile eight-piece band, the 68-year-old singer was the king of cool as he worked the crowd. He looked suave in his formal attire, rocking a tuxedo and bow tie with confidence and charisma. Ferry has such a presence about him,

dominating the stage in the same fashion Cary Grant once did movie scenes.

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Ferry performed a few of his solo classics early on -- including "Kiss and Tell" from 1987's "Bete Noire" and "Slave to Love" from 1985's "Boys and Girls" -- but then jumped right back on Roxy road.

The best moment of the night was the double-shot of "Ladytron" and "If There Is Something," two experimental-rock tracks from the first Roxy album that offered up more twists than a pretzel factory. Although the four-song run that closed the show -- the early disco-dance number "Love Is the Drug," the art-pop classic "Virginia Plain" and the classic-rockers "Both

Ends Burning" and "Editions of You" -- was nearly as phenomenal.

Ferry and crew also did a great job with the radio-friendly smooth-pop material from Roxy's later years. They cruised through a stripped-down, abbreviated version of "More Than This" -- the one



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Roxy Music song that now qualifies as a pop "standard" -- and delighted with "Avalon," which featured some amazing backing vocals.

Ferry certainly put together a fine touring band, which handled the heavy demands of the Roxy Music songbook with style. Yet that doesn't mean the other longtime Roxy members -- drummer Paul Thompson, saxophonist Andy Mackay and guitarist Phil Manzanera -- weren't missed throughout the show. In particular, there's simply no replacing Manzanera, one of rock's greatest ax men.

So, here's hoping that Ferry will decide to reunite Roxy Music for a Bay Area date in the near future. Now, that would truly be a dream night for local fans.

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Dr. Whacky · 6 months ago

Bryan Ferry and company are true musical artists...I never tire of their concerts. Met Mr. Ferr behind the Paramount Theatre in Oakland during the "As Time Goes By" tour, he was so app gentleman. I'll never forget that magical evening.

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QuaglinosPlaceOrMabels → Dr. Whacky · 6 months ago

So envious you got to meet him! Saw him perform in Chicago a couple years ago du 2nd row seats...phenomenal! I was disappointed that the orchestra pit separated the stage, but in retrospect it was probably a good thing. I undoubtedly would have been s restraining order for trying to run up on stage! ;)

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