

ON TOUR

New Barbarians, Cobo Hall, Detroit, MI

This band was to be a once-in-a-lifetime collection of rock superstars. Formed around a nucleus of Rolling Stones Ron Wood and Keith Richards, the Barbarians had reportedly asked the likes of Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Neil Young and Mick Jagger to perform with the group.

It didn't really seem to matter when none of these big names showed up for the concert at Cobo Hall in Detroit. The New Barbarians, a makeshift band thrown together to promote Ron Wood's new solo album, *Gimme Some Neck*, didn't need help from anyone. Performances by Wood and Richards on guitar and Stanley Clarke on bass were outstanding as was the strong backing from Bobby Keyes on sax, Ian MacLagan on keyboards and Joe Modeliste on drums.

The band's stage material is almost exclusively Wood's, with just enough Stones cuts thrown in to pacify demanding audiences. After years of performing in the shadow of Rod Stewart and the Stones, this is clearly supposed to be Wood's show, although frequently upstaged by stunning performances from Richards and Clarke.

Richards, the all-time bad boy of rock, was in top form, trading licks with Wood in sizzling guitar duels and jamming fiercely to Clarke's incredibly fast bass. Already one of the world's best bassists by any standards, Clarke proves with the Barbarians that he can rock & roll with anybody. With Wood and Richards doing most of the singing, the band's vocals were not particularly strong. Wood's "Buried Alive" and "Seven Days"

(written by Bob Dylan) were particularly outstanding, the former containing as much raw electricity and power as anything the Stones have done lately.

With Wood handling most of the vocals, the band satisfied the Stones-hungry crowd with Barbaric versions of four Rolling Stones songs, including "Honky Tonk Women" and "Jumpin' Jack Flash," with Richards, Wood and Clarke exploding into an electronic fury on "Jack Flash" equal to any recorded version of that classic.

The New Barbarians, it has been said, is less a real band than it is a performing advertisement for Wood's album. This is true. The band will probably never perform together as a unit once its current tour is completed. But it's also irrelevant. The Barbarians play a brand of all-out rock that puts most contemporary rockers in the shade.

Brad Flory

Billy Joel, Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan

Detroit is supposed to be a special place for rock & roll. Someone associated with this concert obviously agreed: Detroit was the only city on Billy Joel's current tour that was soaked \$15 per ticket (obstructed view included).

Led by the powerful drumming of Liberty DeVito, Joel and his five-piece band pleased the crowd with a greatest hits package, mostly the faves and raves off Joel's latest album *52nd Street*, including "Stiletto" and "Zanzibar."

And it all sounded "just like the record," according to one breathless concert-goer.

Indeed, the concert sound was one of the best to ever grace the interior of Cobo Hall. Additionally, the concert performance had the rough edge—essential to rock & roll—that is often missing in Joel's records.

Joel pretended to be Sylvester Stallone and faked punches at the audience between songs. He also alternated between shaking and stomping on the out-stretched hands of the people in the first row.

Joel sang his songs, drank his beer, and smiled at the audience, delivering something to enjoy and nothing to think about. The emotions of "Piano Man" and "Angry Young Man" are gone, supplanted by pop fluff. One sensed that Joel's aim was an audience so pleased they would again shell out \$15 a ticket in Detroit next year.

Walt Turowski

Leonard Nimoy in Vincent, Hartke Theatre, Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

At first blush, the story of Vincent van Gogh must have been a very attractive dramatic concept indeed for Leonard Nimoy, who not only thrives on difficult roles as an actor but also publishes his own poetry and photography from time to time. But the life of the great painter was hardly a great drama in itself: it was more like one long wave of pain, without highlight or texture. Until the last few weeks of his life not a single one of his works was sold, nor did he find any acceptance among critics or exhibitors. And his expressive talents as a painter were complemented all too completely by his dismal failures as a lover, friend, son and brother.

Vincent's brother Theo, played by Nimoy in this solo show, recounts his experiences as the painter's chief admirer, defender and financial backer. Theo was an art dealer, at once fascinated by Vincent's art and appalled by his erratic behavior, constantly mediating the running feud between Vincent and their parents, and always frustrated by the public's refusal to buy. In fact, Theo grew so obsessed with Vincent's situation that he himself went insane and died only a few months after Vincent died in his arms.

Nimoy's gruff Theo takes the stage by storm, enraged by the latest critical barbs clutched in his hand, venting half a lifetime of vicarious frustration in the broken phrases of a quiet man at war with his times. Nimoy's utterly convincing portrayal is made a bit less impressive by his use of Vincent's works on a pair of large screens behind him, evoking the overwhelmingly positive judgment of history. Like a stacked deck. This production was just a couple months' diversion for Nimoy after he finished shooting the *Star Trek* flick. But if he takes it on the road again, don't miss it: the story of the two brothers is much more than the sum of its parts.

John Kraut

The Tubes The Palladium, NYC

To put it as simply as possible, the Tubes are a sensation with a show that, apparently consistently, exceeds the wildest hopes of heart-felt rock & rollers who dote on great players and riveting visuals.

In 1975, when the Tubes first "caught on," they wowed audiences with hilarious jokes and an unparalleled assortment of outrageous props, all of which compelled press people to use phrases like "X-rated theatre-rock!" As their Palladium show proved, the alarming theatrics served to underplay their musical talents which, man for man, are pretty amazing. Lead singer Fee Waybill displays unrelenting energy, a wonderful

voice and spellbinding stage presence; synthesizer player Michael Cotton is an absolute wizard; guitarists Roger Steen and Bill Spooner lick like magicians and Vince Welnick plays screamingly tasteful keyboards. And this is to say nothing of the rhythm section, bassist Rick Anderson and drummer Prairie Prince. The one weak spot is, alas, singer (and proggirl) Re Styles.

This time around, the Tubes, in an attempt to countermand their theatrics-before-music reputation, have deleted props and honed in on cult favorites, letting the music stand almost alone. Let no Tubes fan panic—smoke machines; rampaging TV sets; giant cigarettes, hamburgers and cameras; girls dressed as Marlboro boxes and large pills; costume changes and even a motorcycle (used in the incomparable "Don't Touch Me There") are intact.

The Tubes have triumphed in a potentially risky renovation. Material from the latest album, *Remote Control*, slides easily into the show; witness the Rundgrenesque ballad, "Love's a Mystery," performed with no theatrics, and their recent 45 rpm release "Prime Time."

There were a few disgruntled fans. One of them, most certainly a White Punk on Dope, shouted "Todd Rundgren sucks" over and over in reference, one assumes, to Todd's production work on *Control*, the Tubes' latest LP. Some others just booed—and were drowned out.

Alison Wickwire

The Doobie Brothers, Allen Field House, Lawrence KS

When the Doobie Brothers kicked into their set-ending "China Grove" 90 minutes after the lights went down inside Lawrence's Allen Field House, the audience was already in overdrive. But when fireworks and flashpots began exploding in 4/4 time with the song, the crowd uncorked a 12,500-voice shriek that could have been heard in Kansas City.

Led by guitarist Patrick Simmons and keyboard player Michael McDonald, the band opened with a five-song medley of early hits, including a fuel-injected version of "Long Train Runnin'." The song featured some stinging lead guitar trade-offs between Simmons and new member John McFee, and shot the audience to its feet for the first of many times during the course of the evening.

The band proved early in the show that the addition of McFee, saxman Cornelius Bumpus and drummer Chet McCracken more than made up for the recent loss of guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter and drummer John Hartman. The trio of new Doobies added a versatility suited to the band's diverse style, with Bumpus putting in some time on organ and flute and McFee doing some inspired violin and pedal-steel work.

Simmons, who has a big hand in most of the band's all-out rockers, shook the rafters more than once with his power chording and driving rhythms. McDonald writes heavily syncopated, chromatic tunes charged with the same tensions that mark his vocals—his jazz and R&B-influenced songs rounded out the band's amazing diversity.

The band's newer material drew avid response. On three songs from their new album *Minute by Minute*, the crowd broke into spontaneous sing-alongs—not only the choruses, but the entire songs. "What a Fool Believes" was the most popular of the new songs with the album's title cut a close second.

When they finished playing "Listen to the Music" for their second encore, the old and new Doobies walked off the stage amid a flurry of flying drumsticks and long-stemmed roses.

Jeff Klous & Rick Jones