



All photos by Felicia Striver/The Clackamas Print

Above photo: Fans rock out the soothing melodies of the Black Keys during their performance at the Rose Garden on May 7. The band members stand on the stage in order from left to right Patrick Carney, Gus Seyffert, Dan Auerbach and John Clement Wood. Bottom photo: Singer Dan Auerbach belts out the tunes with his melodic singing style during the song "Little Black Submarine."

Black Keys don't fall flat at the Rose Garden

By Isaac Soper
Arts & Culture Editor

If there is one rock concert to see in your lifetime, let it be the Black Keys. Considered by many to be the "new Led Zeppelin," they will not disappoint. The Black Keys performed in Portland in the Rose Garden on May 7; it was their first performance in Oregon since their performance at the Crystal Ballroom in 2010.

Arctic Monkeys opened, which makes one wonder how an agent picks out opening bands. The artists weren't similar at all, other than the fact that they played instruments.

During the opening act, the light technician for the Arctic Monkeys thought it would be a good idea to give the entire crowd of the Rose Garden a fit of epilepsy by having a constant white strobe light flashing in everyone's face.

The Black Keys play bluesy rock, while the chilly chimps seemed to play a variety of alternative metal, using Phil Spector's old "wall of sound" technique, as opposed to crafting something enjoyable and discernable.

One of the lyrics that were actually discernible said "Dog-shit rock and roll," which wasn't too far off from the first half of their set. The majority of the sound they produced had lyrics with Zebrahead speed and mushy metal instrumentals.

Later on, one of their songs was a bit more likeable, similar

to '90s hard rock band Alice in Chains.

"Are there any ladies out there Portland who like screamin'?" asked Alex Turner, front-man for the Arctic Monkeys. He then led his band through some more very fast paced songs that evolved (or devolved) from metal into punk-metal. Next up, they brought an organ into the mix for a pleasing five or six seconds, and then the pain returned.

Finally, another song was played that didn't make one's ears bleed. It was the best one yet, in a tasteful major key—almost a pop/punk song. Once departed from their metal, the Arctic Monkeys were actually enjoyable, sounding similar to '90s alternative rock.

"Do you like rock and roll, Portland?" Turner asked. The drummer, Matt Helders sang a song and his intentions were made clear—he wanted to rock and roll. This was discovered through his multiple uses of the phrase "I want to rock and roll."

After a half-hour break, the Black Keys emerged on the stage. They began their set with "Howlin' For You," off of their "Brothers" album. The audience howled with excitement.

Whoever was running the lights for the Black Keys was incredible. They added so much to the show, opposed to blinding everyone and/or causing seizures. Along with the lights came video behind the band, featuring a live-feed from the stage in an array of colors and an ongoing montage

of pictures, making the concert feel like a non-stop (and well made) music video. Their use of old photographs and 35mm film that appeared to be melting was fantastic.

Every instrument that was played during the Keys' set was crystal clear, while still maintaining the atom-smashing rock and roll sound and feel. During most live performances and tours, they have two other musicians accompany them, while in the studio, they are a two-man rock machine. The duo consists of Dan Auerbach (guitar, vocals) and Patrick Carney (drums); since 2010, Gus Seyffert (bass guitar, vocals) and John Clement Wood (keyboards, guitar, vocals and percussion) have accompanied them on tours.

Though the Black Keys regularly played along with their accompaniments, near the middle of their terrific set, they broke away and played as the core duo, starting with the blues song "Thickfreakness."

As the set went on, the Keys played some songs from their new album "El Camino," including a "Stairway to Heaven"-esque song entitled "Little Black Submarine," which starts off as an acoustic song that breaks and then explodes into a nuclear bomb of rock and roll, with face melting guitar solos to boot.

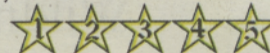
When the main set ended and the lights began to fade, most of the crowd stayed, though some left (apparently not knowing that every band in the entire world does an encore). Those who stuck around chanted wildly for the Black Keys to return, which in fact they did over a period of a few minutes to the crowd's great pleasure.

For the finale/encore performance, two gigantic disco balls were unveiled causing the entire interior of the Rose Garden arena to be illuminated by artificial stars, to which the song "Everlasting Light" was played, followed by "She's Long Gone"

and the Earth-shattering "I Got Mine." During the final song, an illuminated marquee displaying the band's name was lowered from the ceiling.

Once the Black Keys were finished with their performance, the entire audience was in an uproar of clapping, screaming and whistling, hoping that their portion of the cacophony would be heard by the band. "Get home safe so we can see you next time—we'll be back," said Auerbach.

Their performance was unbelievably good, which completely overshadowed the Arctic Monkeys set, leaving one in a daze as to whether they even heard the first set or not. If it weren't for the Arctic Monkeys, the concert would have gotten six out of five possible stars. The Black Keys are definitely worth putting onto your bucket list of rock bands to see at least once in your lifetime.



Pete's Lair Tavern
17720 SE McLoughlin Blvd, Milwaukie, OR 503-652-1430

Taco
6 p.m. - Thursdays
3 for \$2

Sunday
Breakfast 9 a.m.
\$3

Karaoke • Fridays
Starting at 9 p.m.