



MUSIC

STEPHEN MALKMUS HITS NY ROLLER RINK WITH SOME INDIE ACTION

FORMER PAVEMENT FRONTMAN DELIVERED ROCK SHOW AT ROXY FRIDAY NIGHT.



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11/19/2001

NEW YORK — As Stephen Malkmus must have realized Friday night when he played the Roxy, a roller-skating rink doubling as a concert hall might be the most

un-indie venue imaginable. Wide open space, breezy cool ventilation, an

off-center disco ball and no lines for the ladies room were among the more

noticeable distinguishing characteristics. Yet with support from his new

backing band, the Jicks, the former Pavement leader's demeanor was hardly an

anomaly. Addressing the audience with random observations and a

conversational tone, he began the evening by gently warning (as much as asking),

"Ready for some action?"

The show opened with "Sin Taxi," a moody, melodic, organ-oriented number that

appears on neither of Malkmus' current solo releases, an eponymous album

and a four-song EP, *Jenny & the Ess-Dog*. Disc tracks such as

"Discretion Grove" — a catchy, direct descendent of the Pavement days — and

the almost psychedelic pseudo-steel drummy "Vague Space" quickly followed.

Most songs remained true to the three-minutes-or-less mark, leaving the total

running time, including pre-encore suspense, at 90 minutes.

While post-September 11 sentiment wasn't directly expressed, Malkmus placed

particular emphasis on a lyric from the Beatles-ish "Pink India": "As the

news comes across the air today/ ... Tension grows in Afghanistan/Carbine

bullets could settle the score ... / I had a crap gin and tonic/ It wounded me."

The tune was penned, recorded and released well before the terrorist attacks.

Noting the large American flag hanging in the back of the room, Malkmus

recalled playing a recent show in West Virginia in front of a flag. Instead

of political commentaries, he stuck to lighthearted pop culture references.

"It felt like a Lenny Kravitz video," he quipped. The band launched into

"Church on White." Introduced as a "simple story about being born in a small

cabin," the ballad is generally assumed to be a song about a deceased friend.

"Carry on/ It's a marathon/ Take me off the list/ I don't want to be missed ..."

It was the bizarre ode to Yul Brynner, "Jo Jo's Jacket," that really got the

indie-cool, head-nodding crowd going. Teasing New Yorkers for requesting

Skynyrd, Malkmus mimicked the shout-outs with a hometown touch.

"Contortions! Play some Contortions," he jested, "Blondie!" He spilled a

beer onstage then agonized over it, smacking himself on the forehead and

burying his head shamefully in his hands. Later, he scolded himself verbally

for providing a "weak count for the coda" on "Trojan Curfew."

The real antics hit during the encore. Former Pavement percussionist and

current Jicks tour manager Bob Nastanovich emerged to add screams and

tambourine to the already energetic "Jenny & the Ess-Dog." Then John Moen

stepped out from behind the drum kit, swapping spots with Malkmus for a

fun-filled rendition of the Velvet Underground's "Satellite of Love."

"I'd love to do that with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir," Malkmus announced at

the song's end. In a mocking voice he added, "If they were on acid it'd be

so awesome!" Moen said nothing as he retreated to safety, jumping over the

drum set back to his familiar seated position for one last jam.

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