

When it comes to music, you can go home again

*"And so, today, my world, it smiles
Your hand in mine, we walk the miles
Thanks to you, it will be done
For you to me are the only one, al-
right, yeah
Happiness, no more be sad, happi-
ness, I'm glad
If the sun refused to shine, I would
still be lovin' you
Mountains crumble to the sea, there
will still be you and me."*

— "Thank You" by Led Zeppelin

Today — Oct. 27 — is the 300th day of the year. It also marks the second anniversary of the "reverse of the curse" as the Boston Red Sox won the 2004 World Series on a glorious night two years ago.



Wilfred Langmaid
DAYS BETWEEN

However, it is an anniversary of much longer standing as well. Sixty years ago today, on Oct. 27, 1946, the first commercially sponsored television program aired. It was called Geographically Speaking, and it was sponsored by the pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers.

The connection between advertisements and entertainment is a sticky one. One needs the other. However, the reality is that things do not always come as advertised.

Suffice it to say that the beer, the pill, or the vehicle being advertised in many ways, shapes, and forms, as one has watched during World Series baseball games this week, are not going to deliver the unmitigated glee that the advertisements promise just because one goes out and buys and uses those products.

On Monday night, though, I had a great surprise. I experienced something that was just as advertised. More to the point, I did not know just what that meant until I actually experienced it.

You see, I knew that I was going to a concert in a series called "Classic Albums Live." I settled into my seat at The Playhouse, sat through the announcements and local deejay schtick with a bemused smile, and expected to hear a Led Zeppelin cover band.

I remembered cover bands from a generation ago, and expected much more flash than substance. Sure, all of



ROCK AT ITS BEST: Nick Hildyard reprised the role of Led Zeppelin lead singer Robert Plant on Monday night at The Playhouse as part of the "Classic Albums Live" series.

the publicity that I had heard and read indicated that this was a totally different sort of thing, but I went in with a bit of a jaundiced eye and ear.

Attitude adjustment has happened. On Monday, six men stepped onto The Playhouse stage. They did not dress like Led Zeppelin for the most part. Only two of them even resembled members of the seminal hard rock quartet. In fact, there were six people replicating the work of four men.

This was simply because they were doing exactly what was advertised. They had one purpose — to deliver the 1969 album Led Zeppelin II note for note. As such, two of them (and, on one occasion, a third member) were working full tilt to replicate the guitar work done in the studio by Jimmy Page.

While the look and the gestures are the big point of most cover bands, it is a whole different ballgame with "Clas-

sic Albums Live."

Really, the only dead ringer for a band member was Nick Hildyard, who reprised the look, but most importantly the sound, of Led Zeppelin's lead singer Robert Plant in an uncanny way.

Once the first track Whole Lotta Love kicked into gear, it hit me. What was going on was just what the promos said would happen. The execution of the six people was flawless note for

note. You could close your eyes and hear the actual album, and you could open them and see a live band executing it perfectly.

Really, this is what has been happening with the classical repertoire for centuries. A visionary composer wrote a piece of work, and it was played at that time. Ensuing generations have taken that score and performed it live for the enlightenment and entertainment of contemporary audiences. They do not change the work. They play the work.

By contrast, live rock music, at its best, has improvisation and uniqueness at its core. The composition is simply a stepping-off point for the musicians to deliver a unique live concert.

Until I actually saw and heard it on Monday night, I did not fully appreciate the "Classic Albums Live" premise.

An album like Led Zeppelin II is a rock history classic. It was the blueprint for heavy blues rock, and it was the template for every metal band that came along in the years since.

The premise that a classic album being performed in a note for note fashion by gifted musicians would appeal to many was proven to me.

I have heard this album dozens of times in my lifetime. Several of those in attendance had heard it hundreds of times.

None of us, though, had seen it "performed live" until Monday night at The Playhouse.

The second set was icing on the cake. The six men played a range of favourites from the band's 1969 to 1979 run as a quartet, including How Many More Times, Rock and Roll, and the epic classic Stairway To Heaven.

However, the key to the night was the main set — bluesy romps like Whole Lotta Love, The Lemon Song, and Bring It On Home, acoustic breathers like Thank You and Ramble On, the prototype drum solo Moby Dick, and no-holds-barred rockers Heartbreaker, What Is and What Should Never Be, and Living Loving Maid.

They were just as I remembered them from my turntable a generation ago. I can hardly wait until the core ensemble returns in February to do Queen's 1976 career defining album A Night At The Opera. Classic Albums Live was just as advertised.

It still happens sometimes.

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