

Def Leppard plays the hits and nothing but the hits

Written by Richard Amery

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Def Leppard knows what their audience want- plenty of big '80s guitars, catchy riffs, panty removing ballads and sing along choruses designed to take the crowd of mostly 30-50 somethings back to their innocent days of their misspent youth. They were happy to provide exactly what was expected for a sold out crowd at the Enmax Centre, April 25.

There was no room to move at all in the Enmax, while Def Leppard served up plenty of good vibes and popular hits. They sounded smooth, polished, tight and impressive as well they should after playing together for 40 years. They focused on the music from their biggest two albums Hysteria and Pyromania.

They played the apt "Saturday Night" from their 1981 album High and Dry" early in the set to get the crowd in the mood to party.

They began the show with "Rock, Rock Till you Drop," and seamlessly segued into hits like "Foolin," "Animal," "Hysteria," and a couple panty removers "Bringing On The Heartbreak" and another crowd favourite "Love Bites."

They had a pretty basic stage set up. There were massive screens on each side of the stage and a massive screen set dead centre.

Drummer Rick Allen thundered away on top of a chrome drum riser.

A big screen on the back of stage showed neon signs and city images, but switched to old videos and promo stills of the band in their heyday during Hysteria, Collen and Campbell looked in great shape and sounded better strutting up the catwalk jutting into the crowd playing together. Campbell, celebrating 23 years with the band and recently recovered from cancer, had every right to wear his beaming smile, strumming his glittering red spangled Les Paul as he played most of the best known solos from original guitarist Steve Clarke.

Frontman Joe Elliott sounded great, though not quite 1983 great. He had a solo spot, playing "Two Steps Behind" on his acoustic guitar.

A very buff looking Phil Collen handled the rest of the solos and most of the big riffage.

It was a thing of beauty when they strutted up the catwalk jutting into the crowd and harmonized, But everybody got to solo, there was a short and to the point drum solo, and brief

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chordal bass solo for a solid cover of David Essex's '70s classic "Rock On."

One of my favourites was "Armageddon It," which was one of a pair of more serious songs, and which featured visuals of war planes and disaster. They played a couple of songs from their 1999 Album "Euphoria" including "Promises" and the other more serious song "Paper Sun," a rare departure from breezy rockers and ballads, because the show was mostly all about having mindless fun. Mission accomplished.

They wound down an upbeat set with "Rocket," "Let's Get Rocked" and "Pour Some Sugar on Me."

I left before the encore which included "Photograph."

Opening act One Bad Son got a lot of love from the crowd trickling in early, as they did themselves proud playing their hits, including their latest "Black Buffalo" and "Satellite Hotel." Frontman Shane Volk got a workout, scampering from one end of the massive stage to the other as his voice filled the Enmax while he jumped off a box set on the centre of the stage.

Volk began their set by joking "So you're here for Def Leppard, we'll you're going to have to wait as the band crashed into "That Ain't Right." Later he added "We've opened for a lot of bands, but haven't ever opened for legends like Def Leppard," which drew lots of applause.

They dedicated "Scarecrow," which to anyone who lost their virginity to a Def Leppard song. Their scrappy bar band sound full of scrappy, dirty riffs was a marked contrast from the more smooth and polished Def Leppard, which was as expected.

He had the crowd in the palm of their hand for the most part, though behind my seat above the stage, I heard "Who are these guys anyway?"

As soon as Volk said the band was from from Saskatoon, someone shouted "Go Riders." They added a few bars of Metallica's "Sad But True" and ended their set with one of their older hits "Retribution Blues" and cover of the Talking Heads' "Psycho Killer."

— *By Richard Amery, L.A. Beat Editor*