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The Legends Concert

(8:28, Greg X. Volz, Phil Keaggy, Randy Stonehill, David Meece, Farrell and Farrell, Bryan Duncan, Dana Key, and the Ragamuffins)

Tuesday, December 7, 1999

The Mabee Center, Tulsa, OK

By Josh Marihugh

The Mabee Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma has long been a favorite tour stop for the biggest names in Christian music. Pull out the concert listing insert for almost any major Christian release during the late 1970's and '80s, and chances are, you'll see Tulsa, OK, and if the listing shows venues, the Mabee Center. Amy Grant recorded her first live album there, and most of the performers who played at KXOJ's historic Legends Concert had played the auditorium at least once, and some several times.

For those who wonder what PFR's Patrick Andrew is doing now, the answer was revealed. He's playing with Billy Smiley's new band, 8:28. After the Ragamuffins set the tone for the evening with "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," 8:28 took the stage to perform classic Whiteheart material, as well as "Great Lengths," originally by PFR, and a new one for the season called "The Vine." 8:28 has a strong folk-rock feel that reminds me not only of acts such as Burlap to Cashmere, but also, strangely enough, the softer moments of Stone Temple Pilots.

Next came Greg X. Volz, former lead singer for Petra as well as a successful solo artist, who wins the award for most radically changed in appearance. If I'd seen him elsewhere, unless he sang, I wouldn't recognize him. Gone is being backed by accompaniment tracks, Greg performed "The Coloring Song", "More Power to Ya" and one of his solo songs, "Still Waters." The Ragamuffins then joined him in performing "Let Everything That Hath Breath."

The Ragamuffins stayed on stage to perform "Creed," the classic Rich Mullins song. Then, it was time to see a man that, every time I see him, simply amazes me beyond words. Phil Keaggy came to the stage and, accompanied by the Ragamuffins, simply ROCKED on a classic song from the Glass Harp days, which, due to my unfortunate lack of vinyl, I cannot identify.

As the Ragamuffins left the stage, Phil traded the electric for his signature acoustic, and after briefly introducing the song, launched into "Your Love Broke Through", the classic written by Randy Stonehill and Keith Green. The song was an occasion for Phil's usual guitar embellishments. Then Phil called Randy to come and join him, and the two performed "Sunday's Child."

Phil left the stage, and Randy took off on "Shut De Do," which turned, even more than most of the other material, into a loud and raucous audience sing-along. Randy then lit into his ballad "The King of Hearts." Following that, Randy spoke briefly about Compassion International and their work to feed

starving children, then called Phil back out to join him on the song that Randy wrote in 1984 after a trip to Haiti. The song was, of course, "Who Will Save the Children?"

Following the intermission, KXOJ announced the winner of their Song of the Century contest. The winning song was (big surprise here) "Awesome God" by Rich Mullins, which the Ragamuffins then performed.

David Meece, who is working on a new album, commented on his "legendary" status: "My producer keeps saying, 'After all, David, you are <big pause> a legend.'" David then performed four of his biggest songs, including "a song that took on a life of its own," "We Are the Reason." "You know you've arrived when you turn on ESPN and a drum and bugle corps is playing your song."

Farrell and Farrell were up next, starting their first stage appearance in five years with "People in a Box," accompanied by a track. Bob Farrell then strapped on his acoustic guitar and he and Jane performed "Boundless Love" and "Ransom" before going back to the tracks for the title cut from their live album, "Let the Whole World Know."

Bryan Duncan came on stage with his keyboard. He started with a track that he's recorded multiple times, "I Love You With My Life." After a false start on "A Child's Love," Bryan commented wryly "They want me to do songs I haven't done in 20 years, so if I forget, you guys help me out." The Ragamuffins joined Bryan for a cut from Bryan's days with the Sweet Comfort Band, "Contender." Bryan closed his set with the track-accompanied "Love Takes Time."

As Dana Key came on stage, the stage lights dimmed, and out of the darkness came Dana's voice, acapella:

*I don't wanna be a casual Christian
I don't wanna live a lukewarm life
'Cause I wanna light up the night with an everlasting light
I don't wanna live a casual Christian life...*

As the stage lights came back up, Dana, acoustic guitar in hand, launched into "Boycott Hell." Dana then mentioned the perceivable difference in feel between Elvis Presley's rock and roll songs and his gospel songs. "What if Elvis had put that same energy into his gospel numbers?" Dana answered the question with a new song, patterned after Elvis, called "I've Been Happy," After Dana played one more DeGarmo and Key song on the acoustic, the Ragamuffins came back to the stage to join him on "Destined to Win." During his set, Dana announced that he and Eddie DeGarmo are considering recording a new album during the coming year, and promised, if they do so, to debut it in Tulsa.

Dana left the stage, but was soon called back, as were all of the night's performers, to join the Ragamuffins on stage as they performed "My Deliverer." They followed that with "Sometimes by Step" and then, after starting the audience into an acapella rendition of the Doxology, slipped quietly off the stage.

Afterwards, the audience, while leaving, exchanged stories of previous concert experiences. Also commonly expressed was a plan to dig out the vinyl, cassettes, and 8-tracks on which much of the material performed was released, and play them again.

The entire show was filled with artist's stories of past concerts at the Mabee Center (both Jane Farrell and Dana Key have fallen down on stage), tales of how songs were written, and gentle self-deprecation about how old the performers were getting. Some, such as Randy Stonehill ("Yeah, we're legends in our own minds") and David Meece ("I thought that to be a legend, you had to be dead!") seemed to question their status as legends of contemporary Christian music.

This was easily a once-in-a-lifetime event, and, though it lasted 4 hours, it didn't seem long enough. I

could easily have listened to any of the artists that night perform their own complete show. Here's hoping that someone on the concert crew taped this show; shows like this are truly immortal.

Complete concert list

Ragamuffins

- Sing Your Praise to the Lord

8:28

- The River
- The Vine
- Great Lengths
- Independence Day
- Desert Rose

Greg X. Volz

- The Coloring Song
- More Power To Ya
- Still Waters
- Let Everything That Hath Breath (w/ the Ragamuffins)

Ragamuffins

- Creed

Phil Keaggy

- Time
- Your Love Broke Through
- Sunday's Child (w/ Randy Stonehill)

Randy Stonehill

Shut De Do'
King of Hearts
Who Will Save the Children (w/ Phil Keaggy)

Ragamuffins

- Awesome God

David Meece

- We Are the Reason
- Inside Out
- You Can Go
- My Father's Chair

Farrell and Farrell

- People in a Box
- Boundless Love
- Ransom
- Let the Whole World Know

Bryan Duncan

- I Love You With My Life
- A Child's Love
- Contender (w/ the Ragamuffins)
- Love Takes Time

Dana Key

- Casual Christian
- Boycott Hell
- I've Been Happy
- Mary
- Destined to Win (w/ the Ragamuffins)
- Heartbreak Hotel (Elvis cover)

Ragamuffins with all

- My Deliverer
- Sometimes by Step
- Doxology

See photos by Lloyd Marihugh at <http://www.geocities.com/chistrock99/legends/>

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