



*By Ronny North - GJD Contributor*

I was fortunate enough to catch the Paul Gilbert show on May 7th at the House of Blues in Hollywood. To top it off, Richie Kotzen was the opening act.

When we arrived, the line for the show wrapped around the building. Once we got in, we quickly got a good place to see the show and soon the lights went down. The place was packed when Richie Kotzen came out and opened his set with a great version of "Shapes of Things". Kotzen kept up the pace for his entire set playing songs from his many solo CD's. He's got some great songs. My favorite was his song "Remember". Richie has such soul in his voice and his playing.

Richie was playing his signature Fender Strat through his signature Cornford RK-100 half stack. He also had a couple pedals as well. His tone was pure, powerful and loud. Definitely the way a Strat should sound like. Richie really is the complete package. Every time I hear him play he just gets better and better.



His band was a trio with bass, drums and Richie on guitar and lead vocals. They were very tight and even had a couple cool extended jams during the set as well. Richie ended his set with his song "Stand", which was a big song when he was in the band Poison. He had originally written the song for his solo record that he planned on recording before he got tapped to be the new guitarist in Poison. He played the original version of his song (Poison changed it a bit for the version of the song on their Native Tongue CD) and had the whole place singing along with him.

Next up was the headliner Paul Gilbert. He came out and dove right into the title track from his brand new CD *Silence Followed by a Deafening Roar* a very cool song. It had very intricate guitar/keyboard unison lines with his keyboard player Emi that were very impressive.

As always, Paul put on a great show with his effortless virtuosity and great sense of humor. He played several new songs off the new record - the ballad "I Cannot tell a Lie" and the very cool song "Eudaimonia Overture" were my favorites. I've seen Paul play so many times and he's truly an amazing artist. His songs are complex and very musical. The band consisted of Mike Szuter on bass (he regularly played unison lines with Paul that were very impressive), Jeff Bowders on Drums, and Emi Gilbert on keyboards.

Paul played songs from his solo CD's, Mr Big (he did a great version of "Green Tinted 60's Mind" ) and Racer X - yes he played "Scarified". His band was so tight and with Paul the whole way. The crowd was going nuts the entire time.

Gilbert played a few different Ibanez guitars during his set, including a few PG signature models. He was running them through a pedal board with a bunch of pedals through a couple of Marshall combo amps.

For the encore Billy Sheehan, Richie Kotzen and Mr Big drummer Pat Torpey came out and joined Paul for a cool version of "30 days in the Hole" with Richie on lead vocals and guitar. It was a great song and Richie, Paul and Billy traded solos in the middle of the song. As you could imagine the crowd was on their feet.

After the song Richie left the stage after taking a bow and hugging everyone on stage. Paul, Billy and Pat dove right into the Mr Big song "Daddy, Brother Lover Little Boy" (aka the Drill Song). Paul sang lead vocals and Billy and Paul played the solo together on matching Makita power drills with picks mounted on them. It was totally out of control.

Needless to say, it was a great show on the Sunset Strip and it's great to see that guitar music is alive and well. I'm definitely going out and getting both guitarists new CD's ASAP! Great stuff....