



By Keith Augeri

I wasn't sure that I made the right decision as I left my vehicle in the parking garage and raced across the street in the single-digit, negative wind-chill-factor weather to hear the guitar virtuoso Allan Holdsworth on a recent Wednesday evening. I felt much better when Chad Wackerman, Jimmy Johnson and Allan took to the stage for what Holdsworth called, "our final rehearsal."

We were informed that Johnny D's was the final stop on his last tour, and that this season's schedule found the group beginning the tour here. To call Johnny's D's a small club is an understatement; Jimmy Johnson played through the house PA as there was not even enough room on the stage for a bass rig, never mind a potential keyboard rig. Jimmy Johnson apparently must have gotten the time off for good behavior from his day gig (James Taylor) to allow him to accompany the premier fusion guitarist.

The group began with a ballad-like composition penned by Wackerman, then launched into one of my favorite oldies from Allan, from his days with Tony Williams' Lifetime - a tune called "Fred." Johnson was the brightest spot on the stage in the beginning, with inspired bass playing and encyclopedic knowledge of the song forms.

Holdsworth appeared to be preoccupied with his gear - a pair of Hughes and Kettner combo amps, with two Mesa single twelve cabinets underneath - scrolling through some of his patches before deciding on which ones to test out on the audience. He got off several amazing solos, and comped beautifully behind Johnson, who simply tore-up "Water On The Brain, PT. 2" - a gem from the "Road Games" album. Allan then played a ballad, a short solo guitar piece, which utilized both of his volume pedals and his guitar synth, which he used to provide these incredible swells. He was playing his DeLap for the duration of the show, as none of the Carvin guitars that he has been endorsing recently were seen at this gig.

The next offering was from his "IOU" record, a tune called "The Things You See (When You Don't Have your Gun)" which was an appropriate set ender, complete with several bass and guitar flourishes and some nice drum solo work from Wackerman over the form and across bar-lines, who was just getting warmed up.

The band took a short break, and then resumed with a mixture of material from the Holdsworth repertoire – including tunes such as “Tokyo Dream,” “Checking Out,” and some material that the reviewer was not familiar with.

As I prepared to brace myself, and began putting on the layers of clothing that I had wore to the club, I was really glad to have braved the elements to see this show, and to again remind myself why Allan Holdsworth is one of the best guitarists and composers of our age.