



By John McGlasson - GJD Insider

This past Tuesday I attended the sold-out Steely Dan show at the Chicago Theater, and I have to say that even at 41, and as a major Steely Dan fan, I felt out of my demo at this show, and after watching, and even napping through one tune, I found myself asking; was this worth \$150.00? The ticket was over \$100, and gas was \$50, with no other perks like drinks or t-shirts. My 26 year old friend felt like he was seeing Mel Torme`.

It wasn't a total snoozer, there of course were some great musical moments, but I'd heard some great stuff on the web with guitarist Jon Herington who's been playing live with them for years, and honestly that's why I spent the money, but what a disappointment, in that Walter Becker took nearly every solo, in his weak, boring, stale, sterile, lifeless tone. And while he had monumental tone and chops when I did get to hear them, Jon Herington looked bored stiff, as did most of the band. There was a major detachment between band and audience, it was like I was watching a DVD. Drummer Keith Carlock was the highlight of the night, and I wasn't the only one who thought so. Even during the introductions, he got BY FAR the loudest ovation, sending a major message to Fagan and Becker that I hope is picked up on; the one on stage who showed the most musicianship received the greatest appreciation from the crowd. That is, the enthusiastic part of the crowd; the musicians. Oddly, the drummer and the two incredible backup singers seemed to carry this show.

At one point Donald looked around at 2500 people in their seats and looked at the 10 people standing up in front, and somewhat sarcastically declared "This is crazy" before starting another tune. He seemed to be taunting the lifeless audience for sitting down the whole time. I was told the show would go until 10:30p, making it a two-hour set, but we were out of the building by 10:15. At the end, or the way I knew it was the end, was when Donald somewhat randomly got up and casually walked off the stage waving while the band played them off with something reminiscent of the tune the Blues Brothers played while Jake and Elwood made their escape.

Next time fellas, get a fan-friendly venue, at fan-friendly ticket prices, and cater to the crowd of musicians that have kept Steely Dan alive as a touring band all these years, and stop catering to the Gold-Coast Chicago crowd that, combined with the stuffy atmosphere at the Chicago Theater, made this the most lifeless, least personal show I've ever attended. Yes, it was sold out, but all these shows sell out. Yaz, Earth Wind & Fire, Bill Maher and Chris Rock will also sell out, that's not the point. It only holds 2500, Steely Dan could do 3 nights there and sell out, but so could Sonic Youth.

I got the feeling the band were longing for the same thing I was; to be in a club with the 250 musicians in that crowd that appreciate what's truly great about Steely Dan, the fact that they were able to do very poppy, very popular songs that contained astounding musicianship and creativity, but tunes that seemed poppy almost by accident, that they just happen to have pop appeal, not like they were written with that as the focus.

But this show lacked the proper focus, and lacked that critical ingredient; the musicianship. Everyone felt satisfied when listening to those albums, they covered all the bases, but there was a significant segment of their audience at this show that felt left out. There were the usual groups of musicians of all ages that you'll see at any Steely Dan show, and small legions of teenage boys and some girls who were almost certainly guitarists who came to this show hoping to hear what their dads and guitar instructors have been telling them about Steely Dan, about the fact that while many legendary guitarists played on the albums, they've got a do-it-all guy in Jon Herington who does a marvelous job of duplicating the feel we all want to experience when hearing these songs live, but they got cheated by Walter Becker's ego apparently. Herington could literally have sat out this show. I hope my next chance to see Steely Dan is in a club setting, with musicianship once again the focus of this great band. I'd pay \$200 to see that.