

Brainwashed - Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra

Written by John Kealy

Sunday, 21 March 2010 04:34 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 March 2010 13:15



Despite two of their number being ill, Silver Mt. Zion played like there was no tomorrow and midnight was fast approaching. Enraptured by their performance, I could not help but be caught up in the music. Theirs is a music that emerges from the heart and conquers the soul with no preposterous posing and preening. In the past, they have sung that “some hearts are true” and to hold on to the things you love and I believe them. It is hard not to when seeing their conviction on a stage in front of me.



18 March, Dublin, Ireland.

In cognitive neuroscience, one of the standard measures for the emotional impact of music is that shiver that runs down your spine when the music hits you. It is not a reflex to a particular type of sound; it is only present when the listener totally and emotionally engages with the music. So it says a lot that the instant when Silver Mt. Zion launched into “I Built Myself A Metal Bird/I Fed My Metal Bird The Wings Of Other Metal Birds” that the hair on the back of my neck stood perpendicular to my skin and I felt overcome by the music; the twin violin blast

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and sheet-metal guitar cutting through the air like an explosion. Efrim Menuck's vocals were unfortunately lost in the mix for this first piece but the krauty throb of the music was like a tidal wave, taking everything else with it (including the audience).

After the hurtling power of "Metal Bird," "There Is A Light" showcased the more delicate side of the group's music. Luckily, by this point the mix was adjusted so that the vocals were fully audible and Menuck's voice was joined by the heavenly tones of Jessica Moss and Sophie Trudeau. "God Bless Your Dead Marines" gets the biggest reaction, albeit in an unexpectedly augmented form which almost impossibly made the song even more powerful. The round at the end of the song was another goosepimply moment, simultaneously despairing and hopeful.

Dedicated to Alex Chilton, the group finished off their set with "One Million Died to Make This Sound." Superb on record and decimating live, "One Million Died..." exemplifies everything that Silver Mt. Zion are now: inspiring, beautiful and as powerful as a runaway train. Thierry Amar's bass bowed bass and David Payant's powerful drumming propelling the song forward; the music hurtling under its own momentum, sweeping up everything in its path. Finally, an encore of "Microphones in the Trees" from the *Pretty Little Lightning Paw* EP capped off the evening. The opening violin strains sounded oddly formal after the preceding set but that formality is as much a part of Thee Silver Mt. Zion as punk and folk are.



Walking out of the venue after such a stirring performance was like walking from Technicolor to black and white. However, if nothing else, SMZ show that there is Technicolor everywhere if you work to uncover it.

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