

The The

March 3, San Francisco

by Mike Funk

It would scare the shit out of me if I were part of a ten-year-old band that never did a live gig until now. The group, The The, presented the situation as a challenge, and one they conquered when they played on Saturday, March 3rd. I was looking forward to seeing The The leader Matt Johnson's strong musical persona in the flesh on stage. I was also very curious to see what ex-Smiths member Johnny Marr had to offer as the official guitarist for the band. I spoke to the whole group at a press conference before the show and I asked Matt what it's like to go on tour for the first time.

"You've got to have discipline, concentration, and being aware of your body," he said. "In Seattle, my voice went out for the first time in the entire tour. That's because the night before I drank 20 vodkas and I usually don't drink. But I slipped and I had a load. I ended up sounding like Tom Waits," he said while the rest of the band laughed.

The strong impression would continue when the band went on stage around 8:30 with no opening act. They kicked off very loud with "Sweet Bird of Truth" which was enhanced by a great light show that throbbed to the beat. You could tell that die-hard The The fans were everywhere when almost the entire audience was singing along to Matt Johnson's every word. They continued through songs such as "Violence of Truth", "I've Been Waiting For Tomorrow" and "Infected."

The show also proved that Johnny Marr can sound great in any band thanks to his versatility as a musician. A highlight of Marr's talents was his hauntingly beautiful harmonica solo during "Beyond Love." Here was proof that the respect for The The as a full-fledged band was well-earned.

As I was walking out of the Warfield, after seeing one of the greatest live performances of my life, I thought about what Johnny Marr had said when I asked him about The The's live show. "I don't know if you were at the sound check, but we were burnin'!" They did that night.



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