



Cage The Elephant, The Fly, London

26th September 2007



Fresh from a Queens Of The Stone Age support tour, Kentucky's Cage The Elephant are in London for an intense spree of four gigs in four days. Tonight's venue may be a far cry from what they're used to in the States, but despite its tiny size The Fly is perfectly formed with surprisingly good sound.

The five skinny-jeaned boys take to the stage where they stand almost on top of each other, shoulder to shoulder in solidarity and ready to impress. Bassist Daniel Tichenor fiddles around, playing the opening riff from Rage Against The Machine's 'Killing In The Name Of' before they start properly with a mostly instrumental blues rock track. Frontman Matt Shultz and brother Brad on guitar pogo wildly around the small space and I get the impression that it wouldn't matter if they were playing to five people or five thousand; their passion is that strong.

'Tiny Little Robots' is unbelievably tight and the crunch-pause-crunch again sound is immense. Shultz's voice is a little bit Jack White, a little bit Anthony Kedis and a little bit Craig Nicholls (The Vines); he struts his stuff well, swinging his long hair around as he headbangs, skips and dances through the songs. Drummer Jared Champion specialises in dramatic falling-down-the-stairs fills while lead guitarist Lincoln Parish bounces his curly mop in time to the country twang licks he produces on his side of the stage.

'Ain't No Rest For The Wicked' is dipped in vintage blues and has a really catchy chorus that gets even the most nonchalant member of this trendy London crowd tapping their feet, while the more forthcoming among them are itching to mosh but not quite prepared to commit. The Shultz brothers don't give a hoot about them, bouncing off each other and off the stage to dance around the main room while Tichenor stands aloof but mesmerising, hair covering his face as his fingers skip over the fretboard.

A slower song has a happy plodding bassline with dischords over the cymbal crashes. Shultz's raspy vocals cut through the low end power to create a tune that's snake-hipped and funky, and while the Queens Of The Stone Age influence is evident in the thick, squalling guitar sound, Cage The Elephant's songs have a sound all their own; intense, sexy and strong.

The last song of the short set is called 'Free Love', a suitably hippy number where Shultz repeats the line "Free love" over slinky bass and heavy guitars. His almost desperate expression matches his twitching movements, spindly legs crossing and uncrossing as he falls around the stage. The band are bathed in red and orange light as triumphant high end guitar licks add a silver sheen to the wall of sound pounding the room and it's all over too soon.

As I leave I spot the band standing on the doorstep of the venue getting some air and catching their breath and am surprised by how young they look offstage. Not that age matters - Cage The Elephant have the knack for bringing a range of musical influences to the table and coming out with something unique at the end of it, and they're definitely worth a look - catch them on their UK tour in October if you can!


Try this if you like: White Stripes, The Vines, Rage Against The Machine, Queens Of The Stone Age, Red Hot Chili Peppers

Laura Kidd



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