



X Japan plays big to small theater, crowd

BY RICHARD GIRALDI Oct 7, 2010

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When X Japan played their first show on American soil this past August at Lollapalooza in Grant Park, it was a spectacle filled with massive pyrotechnics and epic symphonic metal. Both hardcore fans and curious observers seemed to warm to the band's over-the-top theatrics and ear-splitting riffs. It was a fitting welcome to a group that had been crowned as

X Japan, led by singer Toshi, performs Wednesday night at the Pritzker Theater



Wednesday night at the Riviera Theatre.

the biggest act in Japan for years but never made the leap to the United States.

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On Wednesday night, X Japan returned to Chicago for a show at the Riviera Theatre. But now, the dust from their hyped U.S. debut has settled. X Japan is now just another rock band trying to make it in America - and some of their excessive, arena rock antics were lost in translation.

Gone from Wednesday's show were the fireworks and flame-ups that made their Lollapalooza set a sight to behold. Their crowd this time around, while definitely full of rabid X Japan fanatics, was smaller; there was plenty of room in the back of the floor, and the balcony wasn't even open.

The band, however, didn't let the smaller setting affect a striking performance. Their Lollapalooza set was arguably the loudest of that weekend, and they definitely didn't turn down for a mid-sized venue. The squealing double guitar assault was deafening at times. Taking the place of the pyro was a giant wall of light with simple yet effective visuals, plus the occasional fog machine blast. Lead singer Toshi began the night in his best Bono outfit, decked out in a black leather jacket and dark sunglasses, and even had two more outfits changes as the night when on.

Still, the most impressive aspect of X Japan's show is the quality of musicianship. Principal songwriter, drummer and pianist Yoshiki's classical training came gushing out when he took a seat at the clear-case grand piano for the power ballad "Endless Rain," which, in the night's most heartfelt moment, found the crowd singing along to the chorus. Guitarists Sugizo and Pata traded grinding riffs and lightning leads on songs such as "I.V." and "Jade" that even American metal bands would find hard to tackle.

Yes, the reduced presentation subtracted from the show's atmosphere. But the band played the theater as if they were playing an arena, finishing drenched in

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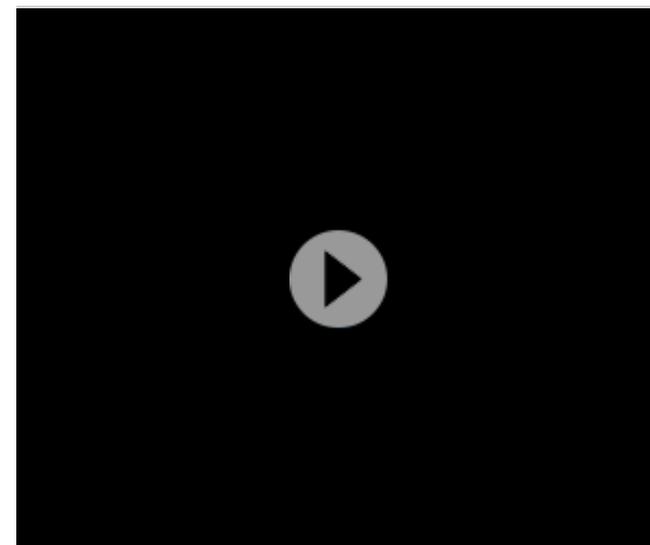


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sweat. If the sobbing girls that crowded the front of the stage after the show were any indication, X Japan may see an American arena sooner than later.

Richard Giraldi is a Chicago writer and the editor-in-chief at loudloopp.com.



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