
Roger Waters On Trial: The Wall At PNC Arena

| August 10, 2012

At age 68, Roger Waters - of the now defunct progressive psychedelic rock band Pink Floyd - proved to be energized and in top form for his multi-media extravaganza presentation of his personal masterpiece, The Wall in Raleigh at PNC Arena July 9th. In 1994, Pink Floyd performed in Raleigh to a packed Carter- Finley Stadium. David Gilmour, Nick Mason and Richard Wright went on performing to sold out arenas and stadiums around the world for several years after Waters departed to make The Wall the focal point of his career.

Backed by a team of top flight musicians, every track from the original 1977 concept album was performed flawlessly in sync with the visually striking animation and theatrics that comprise the experience of the film and the album. Waters transcended time and space as a tortured child who suffers the loss of his father, takes abuse from his teacher and smothering by his overprotective mother.

A metaphorical wall is built brick by brick in his mind -and on the stage -separating the audience from the band and isolating the artist from reality. By the time the wall is completely constructed, both figuratively and physically, Waters has transformed into the adult rock star demigod “Pink”, donning a Gestapo style uniform, shouting racial epithets and blasting a machine gun at the audience. Theatrically stunning and musically phenomenal, The Wall came to life before the eyes of the audience with memorable animation and sound bites from the famous 1982 live action/animated musical film written by Waters and starring Bob Geldof.

Everyone in attendance knew this was a once in lifetime event since the chances of a performance of this magnitude coming back around were slim. Waters toured The Wall during his years after leaving Pink Floyd to smaller audiences with a meager budget on a much smaller scale. For the last three years, he and his crew of hundreds have toured the world mounting the seemingly impossible feat of building and performing a production that is visually, musically and theatrically stunning each time, tearing it down and doing it all over again night after night.

Waters’ personal political agenda was by no means kept secret. Ironically, his anti-capitalist message was projected brightly to an audience of die- hard fans who paid upwards of \$150.00 for tickets. But for the true believers in the audience, every element of both the album and the film were reproduced in perfect order, including new twists on the changing world climate. Images of dead soldiers from past violent conflicts were spattered everywhere, along with politically provocative symbols such as the dollar sign, the hammer and sickle and headshots of Chairmen Mao, George W. Bush and other “tyrants”. Waters’ political leanings only reached the point of annoyance with the song “Mother” which he dedicated to a victim of senseless violence somewhere in South America.

In accordance with the film, Waters translated the innocence of childhood and the experimentation of adolescence and undertakes a close probe into the crossed over adult mind of the suffering rock star tuned cultist leader.

The climactic moment, when each attendee regressed and connected on a child- like-level, occurred during “Comfortably Numb”, an obvious favorite and defining anthem of Pink Floyd.

“Another Brick in the Wall Part 2” also brought out the child in everyone as a group of local children appeared on stage and chorused “we don’t need no education”, danced and pointed at the unforgettable sadistic schoolmaster re-created in larger than life puppet form.

Pink is pilloried for his crimes during “The Trial”, a frightening animated song in which our hero is exposed for all of his sins and labeled insane or “over the rainbow”. The monstrous judge’s order to tear “down the wall” echoed through PNC Arena as the complete structure on stage came crumbling to the ground, shooting smoke and pyrotechnics in all directions.

Like past productions of The Wall, enormous white bricks were stacked slowly by the crew until the band was essentially hidden from view, unless on stage for chosen tracks, atop the mighty structure or through one of the empty spaces. Animation from the film, made famous by the creative mind of Gerald Scarfe, including marching hammers, carnivorous, vaginal flowers and teathed airplanes, were splashed on the white bricks, along with an updated swath of symbols and war photographs dating back to World War I. An enormous pig was flown around the arena providing all in attendance a glimpse of Pink Floyd as they once were 20 years ago.

Though Waters’ political agenda was made clear as expected, the fans appreciated The Wall for whatever deep meaning it instilled in them when they first gave the album a spin or viewed the film.