



BeatleManiacs in Kelowna

I have a confession to make. I had never been to a rock concert. I have played at more than I can remember, in various guises, but never actually simply attended one. So it seems fitting that the first rock concert I saw was one of the most globally influential groups to have ever played rock and roll, the Beatles.

In this case it obviously wasn't the Beatles, but a tribute group that, in my professional opinion, comes as close as possible without crossing the line into disrespectful. What's even more amazing to me is that said rock concert was part of the KCCA concert series and was as well received as any other performance I have had the pleasure of attending.

The BeatleManiacs, consisting of Terrance Gowan, Greg Weeks, Roberto Ferraro and leader Burak Ceylon, delivered one of the tightest, well put together shows I have seen. It was such a pleasure to watch the connection, the fun, the musicianship, the well integrated multimedia, and ultimately the excellently delivered classic rock. Even before the start of the music, Beatles trivia questions appeared on screen and I could hear the audience playing along, reacting to the answers. These guys knew how to bring the crowd into the show, and it worked well. BeatleManiacs have performed this show for over 15 years (they expertly turned the usual 2 hour show into a 1 hour show for this performance), and it was evident from the first song, everything was complete and slick.

Of course, it had to be. When you're going to not just play the music of the Beatles, but dress like them, sound like them (even the accents were pretty good), dance like them, you had better be precise. The energy never stopped, with the boys playing on instruments that matched the originals (kudos to the bassist for learning to play left handed!), harmonies that were solid, and costumes and hair that worked very well and going through a timeline of their music, starting from the early years of black suits and white shirts, through Sgt. Peppers, and beyond. I really liked the little historical trivia thrown in at certain points, and even during costume changes, the energy never dropped, with at least one performer on stage playing a solo or engaging the audience. As the show progressed, the interaction with the crowd increased, and at more than one point I looked around in amazement to see people holding up cell phones as lights, or dancing to Twist and Shout, even singing boldly to Hey Jude. One of my favourite moments of the night was the tribute to George Harrison (the concert was on the 20th anniversary of his death), where the band reached a pure rock apex on the solo of While My Guitar Gently Weeps, and the normally reserved KCCA crowd seemed to reach back to their own youth and responded like teenagers.

If there were some who didn't enjoy the evening, I didn't hear them. BeatleManiacs delivered an high energy, tight performance that even I had a hard time picking apart. (Special mention goes to John Adams and Rusty Gahr who provided great sound and lighting for such a dynamic show.) The Beatles changed music, writing songs that will last in the way we now label classical. As a tribute band to such an important group, the BeatleManiacs are as good as it gets.

by Neville Bowman - musician, composer