‘Dance of the Dead’ causes a graveyard smash at Rose Music Hall

Local band drona brought out St. Louis bands ninevolt and Young Animals for a Halloween performance

Deacon Lipsmeyer, MOVE Reporter

As costumes of all shapes and origins trickled into Rose Music Hall this Halloween, it became undeniably clear that although the show had been billed as a “Dance of the Dead,” the crowd’s energy was alive and well. Organized by local band drona, the show featured Columbia’s inaugural performance from St. Louis band ninevolt and a return 10 years in the making for Young Animals, also a St. Louis band. d



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Young Animals guitarist Nathan Smith (left) jams out with vocalist Olive Schulte (middle) during the middle of their set on Friday, Oct. 31, at Rose Music Hall in Columbia, Mo. Each of the five members of the group dressed as a different Teen Titan for the Halloween occasion.

ninevolt

Having never played in Columbia before, expectations were certainly high as ninevolt took the stage. Tensions were eased when lead guitarist Ava Harkey played her first chord and the group launched into “recognize*,” a moody piece that centers around themes of loss and grief. On a night centered all around death, the choice could not have been more perfect, with audience members swaying along to the tempo of bassist Carlos Vences.

The group delved straight into their faster music, though, quickly turning around and playing “memory” and “ken carson.” Both songs featured whirlwind drum patterns from Sam Vences. The spirit of the room quickly changed as fans began bouncing up and down with the beat, hooked on every word.

Just as it looked like the group’s set was drawing to a close, one more song began to ring out through the venue. Fans packed in tight as vocalist Jonathan Pirrello cried out the opening to “talking in circles,” a grunge-inspired track whose guitar line feels reminiscent of “Where Is My Mind?” by Pixies. Suddenly, with the show over just as quickly as it had started, a thunderous uproar of applause erupted from the concertgoers.

Young Animals

While ninevolt set the tone, Young Animals broke the mold, fully embracing the Halloween spirit as they came onto the stage dressed as the Teen Titans. The group would also go on to perform the original Teen Titans theme song during the middle of the show after several fans demanded it.

No matter how silly their costumes might have been, it was clear that they meant business as soon as guitarist Nathan Smith strummed the intro to "You Can't Just Ask a Person How Many Cellphones They Have." The song, which features a gorgeous guitar intro and a crashing beat from drummer Joe Zempel, is the lead single from the band's latest EP, "Scout."

Taking large influences from both Midwest emo and math rock, the group was a perfect bridge between the softer, more melodic sound of ninevolt and the more electronic indie rock sound of drona. Schulte's vocals effortlessly floated between a light poppy sound and impassioned screams, constantly throwing audience members back and forth like waves crashing on the shore.

drona

Fans were not afraid to be vocal as drona took the stage, with cheers of "WE LOVE YOU" and "DRONA!" heard all the way from the back of the house. Just before the first song began, vocalist and oldest of the three siblings Arjuna Raghu stepped up to the mic and announced to the crowd, "Columbia, my heart bleeds for you!"

The group opened with "fresh air," a booming track instrumentally, thanks to the help of drummer Surya Raghu. It would be impossible not to mention the distorted, almost synthetic sound from guitarist Pasha Raghu. The sound created a sharp contrast to Arjuna's more restrained and nasally vocals, in a sense giving concertgoers two experiences through one song.

Things only escalated as the set went on, with the group also leaning into the Halloween theme by performing staples like the Ghostbusters theme song. Plastic skeletons with glowing red eyes hung down by their ankles from the ceiling. At one point, Arjuna even came into the crowd to let audience members play his signature white stratocaster.

Before the show came to a close, one final song echoed its way through the concert hall. As the almost-marching beat of "over your head" began to play, fans jumped one last time. Because, at that moment, nothing else mattered. Sure, maybe there was no candy being given out, and "It's The Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" was nowhere to be found, but as Halloween parties go, the Dance of the Dead was truly a graveyard smash.

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