

Stones coat it with 'Brown Sugar'



Mick Jagger, left, may have a road map of lines on his face but he still smiled with the best of them Friday night. Above, lead singer Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam opens the Coliseum show.

Immortal rockers, with an assist from Pearl Jam, make concert memorable

By Craig Marine
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

OAKLAND — The British press has been having a lot of fun with the Rolling Stones this tour, calling them the Strolling Bones, for example. But after watching Keith and the boys rock the Oakland Coliseum for 2½ hours Friday night, it's clear that these venerable old men of rock can still crank it out with the best of them.

The rain held off for the first of the four scheduled Stones shows and, under a full moon, there were enough slashing chords and prancing to just about justify the exorbitant ticket prices.

They may be old, but they certainly aren't tired.

With Pearl Jam opening the show, it was a memorable night of music. Pearl Jam alone could sell out the Coliseum. To see them with the Stones makes it one of those concerts people will talk about with their grandchildren, providing they aren't deaf and can actually hold a two-way conversation with their program.

What the Stones still have that no other band can match is Keith Richards. Keith is rock 'n' roll. While his death-defying antics and drug abuse may not exactly be the kind of example you want your kids to follow, the truth is that he is probably the best riff artist in the world.

He strolled on the stage alone to open the show Friday, chipping out the unforgettable chords to "Satisfaction," by way of announcing this was to be an unforgettable rock 'n' roll event — a Rolling Stones concert.

From "Satisfaction" the band went straight into "It's Only Rock 'n' Roll," then launched into "Let's Spend The Night Together." The crowd was behind them, though the Stones briefly faltered and lost momentum when they made the ill-fated decision to early on play four songs from their new album.

The new "Bridges to Babylon" record, truth be told, bites. It's tough to relegate the band to an oldies act, but better the oldies than mediocre new material.

Luckily, there is no band on Earth with the wealth of material the Stones have at their disposal. They can bring out "Gimme Shelter," with its magical, hypnotic guitar, and a \$65 ticket actually seems fairly reasonable. Fairly. Toss in "Miss You" and "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and you've got your money's worth already.

The Stones' sound, since Brian Jones disintegrated, has always re-

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Stones, fans spend the night together

volved around Richards and drummer Charlie Watts. Watching the interplay between the two musicians Friday was one of the great parts of the show.

Sure, Mick Jagger can still run from one side of the giant stage to the other and shake his money-maker, but don't get distracted by the glitz. Watch Keith — he invariably wanders over to Charlie's drum set and plays straight to the drummer. Pure rock, pure fun. These guys are having a blast, which probably explains why they are still playing together after more than three decades.

Richards may look like a walking death's head, but there is still no one else capable of driving a band by sheer force of will the way he can. When he launches into "Tumbling Dice," he forces fellow guitarist Ron Wood to keep up with him. He teases Jagger by playing faster and louder, making Mick expend even more energy.

The show's highlights included a killer "Sympathy for the Devil," "Honky Tonk Woman," "You Can't Always Get What You Want" and the closer, "Brown Sugar." But fans in the more expensive

seats may recall the brief interlude in the show when the band came out to a small stage in the center of the field and kicked into "Little Queenie."

There was no giant video footage of this part of the gig, so the people in the nose bleeder seats probably only saw little specks of Stones wailing away. But up close and personal, it was pretty awesome.

It's going to be hell if the weather takes a turn for the worse. There is no place to stay dry and the promoters aren't allowing umbrellas into the venue, but even a soaked Stones show is better than a cozy concert by someone like Tracy Chapman. Nothing personal.

As opening acts go, Pearl Jam is about as good as it gets. The studs from Seattle may have been a little rusty, not having played together live for a spell, but they came on promptly at 7:30 p.m. and rocked the house big time. Tossing in a few tunes from their as yet unreleased album, they also gave the crowd some of their hits.

Singer Eddie Vedder looked very Mod in a striped blazer, sporting a Jim Morrison-style haircut. He came through with memorable renditions of "Daughter," "Jeremy" and "Black," to name a few. Guitarists Mike McCready and

Stone Gossard were on fire and the band seemed to be having a good time back on the boards.

The Bay Area shows are the only Stones' concerts for which Pearl Jam is opening, so the 200,000 or so people with tickets are among the luckiest in the country.

The Stones play again Saturday night, as well as next Tuesday and Wednesday. Tickets are still available for the mid-week shows, and some tickets may be available for Saturday's show as well. The group never lets on that any tour might be their last, but let's face it, these ain't no spring chickens here. If you want to see the real deal, find out why rock 'n' roll is still vital after all these years, it might be advisable to find a way to get out to Oakland. You won't regret it.