

Dinosaur Jr. Brings the Raw, Brutal Power of Rock & Roll



The original lineup of Dinosaur Jr. came through a packed Met last Friday to pump some loud guitar music into the veins of local residents. Consisting of guitarist J.Mascis, bassist Lou Barlow, and drummer Murph, the band pioneered a high-octane, guitar-heavy sound in the mid-80s that was a precursor to the grunge explosion of the 90s. The show was originally supposed to be headlined by King Buzzo of the Melvins, but in a fortuitous turn of events, Dinosaur was added to the bill, turning this show into one of the concert events of the summer.

The band split in the late in the late '90s, but the original lineup mended their famously fractured relationship in the mid-2000s and hit the ground running, making new music. And unlike many of their contemporaries, their new material has held up compared to the band's golden age.

The show was kicked off by solo guitarist Mary Halveston, whose solo set included a number of diverse pieces. She incorporated elements of jazz, classical and distorted rock riffs to create a unique sound to effectively build the anticipation.

Buzz Osborne, a.k.a King Buzzo, frontman of metal legends The Melvins, took his turn next. Armed with just an acoustic guitar, he performed a mix of songs from his new album, *This Machine Kills Artists* and old Melvins tunes. There are few people who could command a room with just an acoustic guitar and vocals; his songs employed the punishing, down-tuned doom riffs he's known for, and his voice boomed so loudly that even the people drinking outside were forced to take notice.

Dinosaur kicked off their set with the last thing I expected to hear: "Bulbs of Passion," the first track from their debut album *Dinosaur*, which contrasts quiet, ambient verses with distorted, metal choruses aided by Barlow's screaming. It was a good way to punish the audience's ears right off the bat.

Dinosaur Jr. is the loudest band I've ever seen, by a considerable margin. The stage was dominated by Mascis' three full Marshall stacks, which, as you can probably imagine, make the guitar's volume deafening. And, of course, the volume of the other instruments has to be increased to compete, so the whole thing just ends up being ludicrously, gloriously loud.

There are some who may be thinking: That's totally absurd! Why would anyone need three full stacks?

But I say the more stacks the better! The heightened sensitivity of a lot of today's indie music is great and all, but sometimes it's great to just sit back and bask in the raw, brutal power of rock & roll.

J. Mascis has admitted outright that their songs are pretty much "just build up to the guitar solo," and watching the master at work is the best part about their live show. He just stands there, hardly even changing his facial expressions while his fingers skate around the neck, creating roaring, distorted madness like only he can. The other members are no slouches either; Barlow frantically strummed his Rickenbacker Lemmy-style, and Murph's blazing-fast fills were as clean as ever.

You're Living All Over Me, which came out in 1987 and is thought by many to be their best album, was very well represented in the set, with songs like "The Lung," "Raisins," "Tarpit," "In a Jar," and their cover of The Cure's "Just Like Heaven." The band also tore through their '90s radio hits "Start Choppin" and "Feel the Pain" and post-reunion singles "Pieces" and "Watch the Corners." The band even brought it back to the early '80s, playing a song called "Training Ground" by Barlow and Mascis's hardcore band Deep Wound that's "about how school sucks." The highlight had to be their encore, the fan favorite "SludgeFeast," with the crowd going into circle pit frenzy.

My only complaint: It's great that the band regularly plays the crowd-pleasers, but they seem to cycle through the same songs during every show. With such a large catalog, Dino could really expand their setlists into something a little more comprehensive.

The concert may have killed a few brain cells, but it was totally worth it to see a band that is showing no signs of slowing down.