

# THE ROCKIT

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## LIVE REVIEWS



Skiny Puppy @ Henry Fonda Theater - 6/23/07

by Kristen Kawaguchi

photo by Jenn Freire

At 11:15 p.m., the crowd at Henry Fonda Theater erupted in a deafening amalgam of whistles, screams and testosterone-fueled battle cries. Skinny Puppy had taken the stage. Tonight would be the band's second-to-last performance in the States in support of its thirteenth album, *Mythmaker*.

On a white blood-spattered screen was Nivek Ogre's crouched silhouette. Opposite him, in an army green Castro-style cap atop his trademark dreads, cEvin Key bobbed to the beats behind his steel station. Justin, also with dreadlocks, cracked and crashed on drums.

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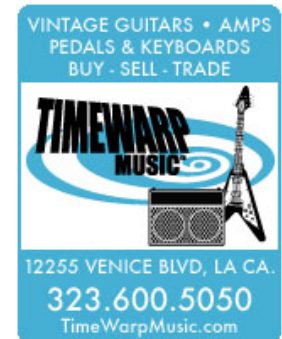
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After two songs, Ogre emerged from behind the screen in white face paint and a laboratory coat, staggering pigeon-toed to the center of the stage. Bright orange air hoses attached to a metal cod piece swung with every lurching step. The 90-minute performance, which included a two-song encore, found Ogre periodically running behind the gory screen and donning one of three Balinese-style shadow puppet headdresses. Making use of negative space, the shadows of the headdresses appeared like graffiti stencils on the blood-splattered screen.

For "Pedafly," a headdress of a human profile was used. Orange flames were projected onto the two large screens behind the band as the tight crowd shoved and fell into each other. Ogre's silhouette spastically shook a rosary during "Ugli" while numerous images of Jesus, army tanks and missiles blinked on the screens. "Worlock" and three songs from out-of-print *The Process* were met by an ebullient audience. Soft blue lights brought the opening notes of "Haze." Ogre reemerged this time wearing a metallic butterfly-faced welder's mask equipped with an extending and retracting needle-like mouth and curly wires. Concluding its first tour since 2004, Skinny Puppy satisfied listeners-- both rivethead and metal-- with a unique and stunningly visual concert.



**VNV Nation, Babyland, Imperative Reaction @ Wiltern - 6/23/07**

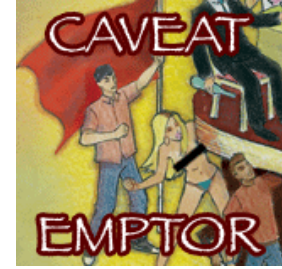
by *Chrix Lanier*

photo by *Charlie Martinez*

For virtually two decades, synthpop/EBM outfit VNV Nation (Victory Not Vengeance) has used its philosophical and charismatically quick wit to sell rhythmically-binding albums across the globe. VNV Nation's legions of loyal fans lined up for blocks past the Wiltern armed from head to toe in rivet gear, black mesh, silver jewelry, and all the eyeliner one can mask just to get a glimpse of the band. Having recently released *Judgement* on Metropolis Records, VNV put its latest material on trial before a nearly sold-out jury.

Local favorites Babyland and Imperative Reaction kicked off the night with the enthusiasm of what must have been nearly 2000 blaring fans. When the opening bands had finished and the lights went up for the start of the headlining performance, what happened next could only be described as incomprehensible, blissful madness. After all these years, VNV must be doing something right, as the audience shouted from the tops of its lungs and raced to the front in an attempt to procure the best possible spot.

VNV Nation's Ronan Harris (lyrics, vocals, electronics) and Mark Jackson (drums) were joined by two guest musicians on keys. Harris continually ran from one side of the stage to the other cheering on the crowd. He joked with the audience between songs about how he was getting a workout thanks to the immensity of the stage. Nestled in soundly behind Harris was Jackson, who stood on a platform shrouded in shadows. Several large projection screens were lined horizontally behind them projecting images of vast oceans, and cities rising and falling, no doubt a representation of the utopian/realist themes that are so pervasive in the band's music.



The track listing consisted of a mix between the old and the new, including all the favorite ballads. The audience used up every bit of energy VNV could dish and danced until the very last song of the second encore.

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**Codec feat. Mochipet, Baseck, John Tejada, Derek Michaels @ The Bee - 6/29/07**

*by Liz Ohanesian*

It was the sort of night that could drive any promoter to the brink of madness. A film shoot had blocked off Melrose and Larchmont, thus delaying any activity at the Bee (formerly Larchmont and, before that, Martini Lounge) by almost two hours. The event was supposed to begin at 9 p.m. and promoters Droid Behavior and Robtronik had gathered roughly 10 performers to take partygoers through the evening. No one gained entrance until nearly 10:30, at which point I saw at least five people flee the scene. When we finally made it into the club, the DJs had just begun to play. On top of this, complaints about noise levels from the film crew meant that the DJs on the Bee's terrace had to play at levels almost inaudible to any set of nightclub-frequenting ears.

This party was clearly on the quick path to disaster, but the end result was one of the most exciting club nights I have attended recently. Despite the circumstances, Droid Behavior's Vidal Vargas (also half of the DJ team Acid Circus) is the consummate party starter. He is always the first person out on the dance floor, the tall guy who thrusts his hands into the air and draws even the worst wallflowers into the center of the club. Needless to say, the energy and volume soared to film crew-irritating levels by 11 p.m. Baseck, of L.A.'s own Darkmatter Soundsystem, played a violently blissful mix of drum and bass, breakcore and power noise. At one point, I could have sworn I heard ABC's early-1980s hit "Be Near Me" sampled and looped through some demonic processing device. After Baseck, Derek Michaels (Detroit Underground) performed a live set of primarily minimal sounding techno while L.A. DJ John Tejada played high-impact dance sounds downstairs.

The highlight of the evening was a live performance from Daly City, California-based producer Mochipet, who Vargas introduced as "Dinosaur Jr." on account of his fuzzy reptilian costume. Seemingly plagued by technical difficulties, Mochipet did not perform until well after 1:00 a.m., but the wait was worth it. Imagine what might happen if you fused together Aphex Twin's most disturbing tracks with R. Kelly singles and you might begin to understand Mochipet's sound. As a performer, Mochipet is spirited and has a knack for interacting with the crowd. Sadly, after the second song, we saw security motion to Mochipet that he had five minutes to finish. Needless to say, the PA was rendered useless after a 10-minute set. Though this development was unfortunate, Mochipet crammed more energy into three or four songs than most bands can draw out over the course of an hour.

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**The 69 Eyes, Wednesday 13, Fair to Midland, Night Kills the Day @ El Rey Theatre - 6/30/07**

*by Andrew Schwartz*

During a recent Saturday night in June, the El Rey Theatre could be seen by the average passerby as an area surrounded by groups of punks in solid black with facial piercings, cigarettes and unique hair-styles. The occasion was a headlining concert by the Finnish gothic rock/ horror punk band the 69 Eyes, recently famous for the single "Lost Boys" that appeared on Bam Margera's *Viva La Bands* CD. Despite the 69 Eyes' solid performance, which had most of the attendees rushing towards the stage, the opening bands were far more memorable.

In between Wednesday 13's loud horror movie-inspired and devil horn-waving hard rock and New York's Night Kills the Day's gloomy post-punk rested the most dynamic performance of the night from Fair to Midland. This Texas five-piece has already experienced success, including a spot at Coachella and a record deal with System of a Down's Serj Tankian (who was in attendance at the El Rey Theatre) and Universal Records. The band will also be opening for Smashing Pumpkins later this summer. Regardless of the low stature of this opening slot, Fair to Midland played with consistent energy from beginning to end. Beginning

with "Walls of Jericho," one of the top tracks off its latest album, the band soared through a 30-minute set fueled by its potent progressive rock and commanding vocals that fall somewhere in between Incubus' Brandon Boyd and Tool's Maynard James Keenan. When Fair to Midland ended its set with the single "Dance of the Manatee," lead singer Darroh Sudderth and company left a lasting impression with the audience. Thanks to the catchy vocals and guitar lick of this song along with Sudderth's crazy antics on stage, it was an unforgettable conclusion. Fair to Midland was by far the best of the night and a group to watch out for in the future.

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#### Lemon Sun @ Club Underground - 7/13/07

by James Cobo

Part of me wonders whether my ebullient reaction to Lemon Sun's set might simply have been due to the sheer joy of discovering another local band about which I can comfortably get excited; it feels like a long, dry couple of months since the Procession presented itself as the Only Band in L.A. that Matters, and it would be nice to see that dry spell come to an end at any cost. Of course, the rest of me quickly returns to Lemon Sun's astonishingly accomplished take on the modern Britpop idiom – it's enormously apparent that the band hasn't just studied its Jam and Who records, but also how and why modern bands like the Libertines updated those old records' sounds for a modern audience. Best of all, even though I had never seen or heard of Lemon Sun before, I still found myself impressed by the apparent upward trajectory of the band's skills. Without exception, all of the new songs displayed catchier hooks and tighter arrangements (especially with regards to the drums, which played an active part in filling out the new stuff). Granted, playing at Underground – Los Angeles' premiere Britpop appreciation society – gave the band a home field advantage, but if anything, its talent is only that much more evident when you are afforded a chance to hear just how much further along the band is than the Kaiser Chiefs, even at this early stage in its development. I suspect that this is a gap that will only grow wider with time.

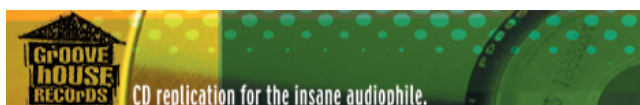
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#### The Field @ Mor Bar - 7/19/07

by James Cobo

When describing a set assembled by a DJ consisting almost entirely of his own readily available material, it's nigh-impossible to avoid using the word "lazy"; after all, rightly or wrongly, a substantial component of the compact between DJ and audience lies with the former's ability to introduce the latter to stuff with which it isn't familiar. Of course, when the source material on which you're drawing comes from one of the most focused and idiosyncratic catalogues in the idiom in which you work – as is most certainly the case with the Field, whose *From Here We Go Sublime* may well stand alone in terms of pure accomplishment among this year's crop of releases – you've got some capital to spend; I could probably listen to Axel Willner slice and dice the AOR guitarwork at the heart of "A Paw In My Face" once an hour on the hour for the rest of my life and still never grow tired of it. And of course, it's also just flat-out fun just to watch this stuff *work* on an actual audience – if nothing else, a Field set will show you that yes, Virginia, other people really do fall for that "skip" in "Sun And Ice" besides you. Just because it's not new to *you*, after all, doesn't mean it's not new to *someone*.

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