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REVIEW: ZEPPARELLA & HELL'S BELLES @ THE ROXY

A fresh twist on some old classics

March 4th, 2015 Jay Chirinos Category: [Review](#)

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The musical history of the Sunset Strip is equally celebrated and scorned. In its '80s incarnation, the area was the epicenter of the glam-metal scene that made the likes of Guns N' Roses and Mötley Crüe into worldwide stars, but it's safe to say the sleaze factor was through the roof. These days, the Strip is something of a historical relic. Certain formerly legendary venues have become pretty much pay-to-play places, but The Roxy's recent rejuvenation has remade it into one of the city's best small venues.

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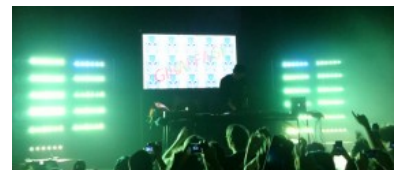
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All photos by Brian Feltham

In terms of debauched behavior, it's also safe to say that Led Zeppelin is considered the worst kind of pioneers, and stories about the band have served to besmirch their considerable musical legacy. While that kind of bloated excess is now a thing of the past, it is a reminder that a fair chunk of rock and roll's history has been, for want of a better phrase, one long dick-swinging contest.

Which begs the question: what do these titanic rock anthems sound like when performed by all-female groups? At The Roxy Saturday night, both Zepperella and Hell's Belles (Zeppelin and AC/DC cover bands, respectively endorsed by none other than Jimmy Page and Angus Young) went some way to providing an answer.

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Seeing Zepparella the same week as *Physical Graffiti*'s 40th birthday and vinyl re-release felt fitting. Opener "Out On The Tiles" was instant proof that these songs just do not age. Its delivery was also proof that these four ladies could produce the required dynamism and power to do the songs justice.

Over the course of an hour they delivered a string of Zeppelin's finest moments, including a tremendous extended take on "Dazed and Confused" that saw guitarist Gretchen Menn emulating Jimmy Page's guitar histrionics, complete with violin bow. Noelle Doughty's vocals may not have quite been the equal of Robert Plant's, but then whose are?



Driven by a tight rhythm section that featured Clementine drumming as if her life depended on it, this was as solid a performance as you could hope for from a cover band. As for the female aspect, it's safe to say that to hear a lyric like "Soul of a woman was created below" sung by a female vocalist is to hear a borderline-misogynistic line delivered like a threat. Context really is everything. Visually, those pure white outfits turned out to be a terrific contrast for the headliners.



The members of Hell's Belles were decked out in black, ready to deliver some of the scuzziest rock anthems ever written with a furious energy. Much of that energy belonged to one person: Adrian Conner, the dreadlocked lead guitarist whose hyperactivity makes Angus Young look like a lazy slouch, even in his prime. She was ceaseless in her movement, somehow managing to hold it together while throwing herself across the stage, stalking through the crowd, and at one point appearing on the back bar of The Roxy some 30 or 40 feet from the stage.

Om Johari served as the foil, although her lead vocal packed a heck of a punch. The highlight was probably "Thunderstruck," simply one of the most exhilarating and fun rock songs of all time and the highlight of any show in which it gets an airing.



In truth, I'm not one for cover bands, but this double whammy at The Roxy turned out to be an oddly fun night of macho rock songs being reclaimed by two groups of awesomely talented women. If nothing else, both acts set an example for plenty of so-called "original" acts when it comes to raw showmanship.

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