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November 21, 2011 | Posted by **Tony Wade**

Trans-Siberian Orchestra wows with music, show

SACRAMENTO — Since the first time I saw Trans-Siberian Orchestra live five years ago, I have tried to explain to friends what an incredible experience it is. The problem is, words tend to be inadequate.

Yes, it is a rock show. Yes, it is a Christmas concert. Yes, it is theatrical. But it's also so much more than all those things. While it usually performs around the holidays, the show owes more to Queen and Bad Company than to Perry Como and Bing Crosby.

It is a Christmas time rock 'n' roll extravaganza.

Trans-Siberian Orchestra is a progressive rock band that seamlessly blends the power and crunch of hard rock with symphonic and classical music and perform it all in a spectacle that is so awesome, it is truly hard to describe. You kinda just have to experience it.

It is one of those bands like Rush that has so much virtuoso talent it could wow an audience with the music alone, yet it enhances its performances with an inventive, playful and elaborate visual show.

On Saturday the massive lighting rig suspended over the performers rotated, twirled and kinda looked like the Spielberg-ish offspring of the smaller spaceships in "Close Encounters" and a Transformer.

I told you it was hard to describe.

Suspended over the audience was a massive Y-shaped platform and when the bottom lit up as it frequently did, it kind of resembled a colossal "Back to the Future" flux capacitor. It later descended and the performers climbed on and rocked out high above the crowd.

The show featured multicolored lasers, video screens flashing images from past presidents to the pyramids, explosions, flash pots, fire, fog, faux snow, sparklers, strobes and spotlights.

During one of the band's most popular songs, "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24," it released the floodgates and the spectacle combined with the frantic wailing guitars nearly reached the point of sensory overload. But in a good way.

The whole band was wonderful, but highlights of the evening included:

- Deep-voiced narrator Phillip Brandon beginning the story of the angel coming down to Earth with a snap of his fingers that cued a breathtaking starry background.
- Guitarist and musical director Al Pitrelli, who crunched out heavy riffs, played screaming leads as well as tender acoustic accompaniment.
- Powerful singer Chloe Lowery, who wowed the crowd with her range and emotion.
- The playful keyboard duel between Jane Mangini and Derek Wieland, which pitted bluesy, jazzy runs against classical pieces and ended in a "Linus and Lucy" snippet.
- Violinist Asha Mevlana, who held her own with the ax slingers onstage with her purple instrument.
- "The Mountain," which featured the chunky rhythm of the band's version of Edward Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" during which the stage was changed into a fire-breathing dragon.

As if all that wasn't enough, the orchestra also presented one of those big ol'

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checks for \$13,501 to the Me One Foundation, a Roseville nonprofit that runs a family camp for those battling cancer. The dollar figure represents \$1 for each ticket sold.

Trans-Siberian Orchestra's concerts are epic and while YouTube videos and pictures may be worth more than my less-than-a-thousand words, even they don't do it justice.

Reach Fairfield writer Tony Wade at ***over40rocker@sbcglobal.net***.

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Posted by **Tony Wade** on Nov 21 2011. Filed under **Entertainment**. You can follow any responses to this entry through the **RSS 2.0**. You can leave a response or [trackback](#) to this entry

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CD Brooks

November 22, 2011 - 7:28 am



Mr. Wade, I could not agree more! The show is a spectacular masterpiece with some of the most incredible talent ever assembled on one stage. They are constantly adding new material and it is phenomenal. We usually alternate between their show and the SF Symphony every other year. That is a nicely rounded, if not extreme Holiday treat!

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