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## The War on Drugs at Schubas | Live review + photo gallery

Posted in Audio File blog by Gavin Paul on Aug 29, 2011 at 3:23pm



War on Drugs at Schubas

Photo: Laura Gray

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Americana, Indie/alt rock, Music, Rock & Roll, Rock, pop & hip-hop

### Keywords

saxophone, Slave Ambient, Twitter, War On Drugs

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Miles away from that bitch Irene and the wall of rain she was visiting upon the Eastern seaboard, Philadelphia's the War on Drugs was stopping by Schubas on Friday night, building a wall of another kind—a classic-rock hybrid warmed with layers of early '90s indie-fuzz. The blogosphere has dubbed it "Boss-gaze."

That's nearly a perfect a tag for what these dudes do. Frontman Adam Granduciel came slinging angst on the surface, shredded at the knees in a pair of jeans, his hair in his eyes. He spun the tired but charming cliché that Chicago's the "best city in the whole damn country," mostly just to set his band up for lead-off tune, "Best Night," off this month's sophomore album drop, *Slave Ambient*.

And then it preceded to jam, stringing one double-digit minute medley after another, from the reverb-washed synth chug-a-lugger "Your Love Is Calling My Name" into arena-ready U2-esque anthems like "It's Your Destiny" and "Come to the City." Granduciel channeled everyone from Dylan to My Bloody Valentine, complete with a Bono "hoo-hoo" after a lyric about rambling and drifting.

That is where the War on Drugs was most potent. Granduciel laced sparkling riff after riff like some estranged protégé brother of Jeff Tweedy. Drummer Mike Zangh tumbled along flawlessly. The tiny arch of Schubas' stage had trouble containing all the textures. The band played so cool and confident—it had even recruited a sax player via Twitter blast a few hours before the show.

When you'd think the swell would never end, Granduciel would lead the crew into a rousing cut from the sprawling Americana of their debut, *Wagonwheel Blues*. As it pulled off a better-than-the-Boss-himself "Arms Like Boulders," Granduciel ceased to suck air on a harmonica only to pluck his guitar strings with it, and howled to crowd, "Yes and now, now's the time to wrap your ears around the sound / Of your train coming round." If this is where the rock train's a rolling these days, consider ourselves on board.

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