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Tomorrow Never Knows 2011, The Helio Sequence at Lincoln Hall: Live review and photo gallery

Posted in Audio File blog by Gavin Paul on Jan 13, 2011 at 2:13pm

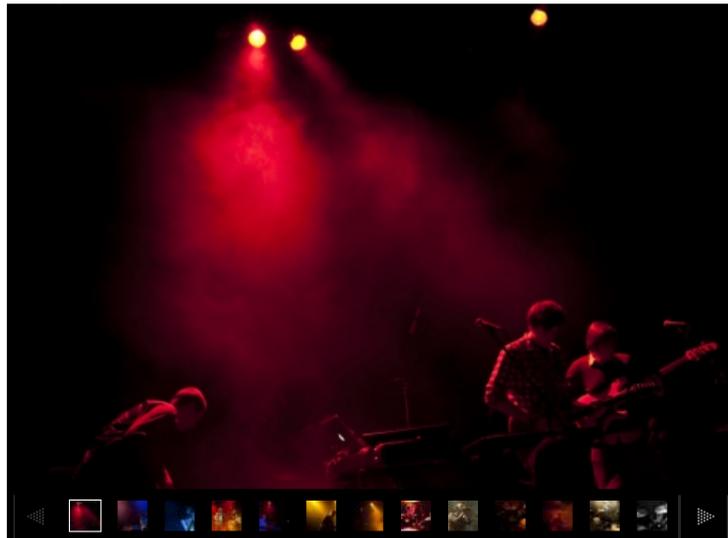


Photo: Samantha Murphy

Happy to be offered a burrito instead of, say, a fixed-gear bike ride and PBR session, rattled off lead singer Brandon Summers in response to an in-the-audience post-show offer, Portland key-drum-and-guitar duo The Helio Sequence was all smiles to kick off the first night of Schuba's annual mid-winter festival, Tomorrow Never Knows, showing no signs of the debilitating vocal chord shredding Summers endured after a break in 2004 with Love & Distance. California Wives, Houses and Sun Airway warmed up the stage, see photos below.

Photos: Samantha Murphy

The story goes that Summers had to completely retrain himself to sing in order to kick out the band's 2008 follow up, Keep Your Eyes Ahead. Though that retraining seemingly rounded him out for the better in terms of last night's gig, as he traversed through harmonies like a downtrodden Paul Simon, following the urban shuffling rhythms of Benjamin Weikel within tunes exclusively from the band's last two records.

Instead of his voice taking the strain, Summers threw all his energy into all his signature lofty shimmering guitar work and bluesy harp wailing, letting the band's invisible third man, the laptop, conquer the keys and texture blips, so as to pay supreme attention to Weikel on crowd pleasers like "Hallelujah," "Harmonica Song" and "Lately." All that Pacific Northwest heartache Summers likes to pen cut through crisp and clean, punchy even, with many a fan shadow drumming along.

Despite the blunder in not working in its cover of "Tomorrow Never Knows," from 2003 debut Corn Plex —c'mon dudes, that setlist writes itself—the jewels of the eve came in two new peeks at future songs, hinting at a deviation from the band's crunchy digi quirks that pepper its back catalog. With a minimalist cathartic number called "One More Time" and an unnamed encore with falling streetlight imagery and a galloping drumline, the duo perfected a new hard-hitting wandering folk sound, proving once again, that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

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Keywords California Wives, Houses, Lincoln Hall, Music/Clubs Gallery, Sun Airway, The Helio Sequence, Tomorrow Never Knows

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