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## X Japan at The Riviera Theatre: Live review + photo gallery

*Posted in Audio File blog by Gavin Paul on Oct 7, 2010 at 4:27pm*



Photo: Laura M. Gray

Photos: Laura M. Gray

There was something endearing about seeing Japanese import Toshimitsu Deyama stare down a full house of American fans cross-arming the eponymous 'X' symbol he and best friend Yoshiki Hayashi envisioned back in 1978—despite the presence of Teleprompters and use of an ornate set of samples. Considering the band once called it quits in Iron Maiden of the East fashion at the Tokyo Dome in '97 to hundreds of thousands, just seeing them in the states at all is something of a dream materialized.

The band teased the metal nation with a Lollapalooza appearance this past summer, but now this jaunt, which kicked off in L.A. in late September, is the band's first proper American tour ever. And if you weren't there for the tease, X Japan is a master of epic metal on the other side of the world. Toshimitsu screams right up there with the banshee hell ranks of Al Atkins and Bruce Dickinson. Yoshiki is his classically trained pianist and warrior drummer. And together, with the help of a trio of guitarists, X Japan possesses a call-and-response fury infused with operatic mayhem.

Spanning the material from their punk speed thrash youth—they were originally called 'X'—to the orchestrated spectacle of smoke, strobes and technical scale precision of recent years, not one of its five albums was neglected in the set. Yoshiki commanded a variety show of piano and electric violin interludes, usually dramatically slammed out of place with a dissonant key clobber, as on swan song "Art of Life," a regularly 29-minute opus, cut down to under 10 to curtain the evening.

Setting aside some of their technological assists utilized by Toshimitsu and Yoshiki, and a good 15 minutes of costume change time, the high points of the concert came in the form of a blast from their pink fountain hair glory days which found the band members pointing at everyone they could on battle cry "X." Toshimitsu clenching "You don't have to hesitate. Get yourself out!"

There were the stock ballads, of course, featuring the house lights shining bright and revealing a peculiar amalgamation of goth and teen Japanese girls hoarding the front of the stage, shedding sing-along tears to "Endless Rain's" "Let me forget all of the hate, all of the sadness," chorus. Yoshiki took a moment to thank everyone for coming and promised they'll be back because he has yet to try Chicago-style pizza.

More true to the spirit of its assault on North America, coming after "Art of Life," the encore was a rock gremlin growl out of both Yoshiki and Toshimitsu, who had both taken time to don ivory capes and coats with giant crosses embroidered on the back—not for a song but a chant. Looking like unholy emperors, they demanded "You. Are. We. Are. X." chants from the crowd, reminding all of the domination mission ahead.

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