



Billy Idol snarls to full house in Baltimore; Bacon Brothers display true talent

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By *DIANE LEIGH DAVISON*,
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The Rams Head Live! in Baltimore played host to Billy Idol on Sept. 10 and The Bacon Brothers on Sept. 16. While Idol played and snarled to a sold-out crowd, the Bacons (film star/director Kevin and composer/artist Michael) performed to only several hundred ticket holders, and their talent deserved more. Those who attended were not all necessarily fans of the music, rather many were inquiring minds wanting to know if Kevin is as sexy and charismatic in person as he is on the big screen (Hint: yes).

The continuity between the shows was surprisingly in the fan base. Idol's fans sadly did not display the hardware they once did, but tended to the conservative and actually aged, much like The Bacons' fans who were aplenty in the 50-plus demographic.

Smiling and laughing, showing skin and shaking it, Idol performed as if it were 1983 (the last time I saw him in person). Fans had as much fun as he did ... without the excess of the '80s. His set surprisingly included eight of the 13 songs from his new CD, *Devil's Playground*. Although the new music sounds a lot like the old music, it still hasn't lost its panache nor its edge.

Idol slammed through a two-hour, high-powered whirlwind of every song that made him famous, including his Generation-X hit "Ready, Steady, Go!" Idol's voice was studio-pure-perfect; his body was taut and his show nonstop fun. His only serious note was a new song introduced to the set list, "Louisiana," in tribute to the hurricane-ravaged area.

Idol's guitarist Steve Stevens, who is a Grammy winner for the *Top Gun* soundtrack, is Idol's longtime collaborative partner. Stevens jammed on some good solos allowing Idol some downtime, as well as time for a "costume" change, which was pretty superfluous because he took off his shirt to bare his chest almost immediately.

As often evidenced at Ram's Head Live! concerts, Idol fan club fans who logged on his Web site and doled out \$250 for the "Platinum Package" were treated to early admission and huddled across the expanse of the front of the stage. But what followed was truly admirable. Idol signed autographs for those in front continuously throughout the show, even while singing, mike in hand.

Showmen

Billy Idol played up the sex, even stripping off the sweaty skin-tight clothes, baring his

muscle-bound chest and slithering around. Much in contrast to Kevin Bacon, who just simply exuded sexiness in his laidback jeans and T-shirt, offering us some of his signature dance moves during songs, ever the showman.

But don't let that detract from the music because the music was good. Damn good. Many were surprised by the all-around true talent of Kevin and Michael. Michael's voice is just beautiful and explains the record deals early on in his career. Although most people didn't come to the venue knowing the duo's music, all were able to soundly enjoy the music.

The only negatives to The Bacons' performance was that it was too short (76 minutes), like Idol top-heavy with six songs from the new release, *White Knuckles*, and omitted their rendition of "Footloose." Kevin previously said he really doesn't care for the song and apparently has now made the transition away from his nod to his acting days during gigs.

Most Bacon Brothers songs had touching or humorous stories as the basis or the lyrics, often introduced with some explanation by Kevin. Their song "Unhappy B-Day" from the new CD was a beautiful 9/11 tribute, "Don't Lose Me Baby" a touching song about Michael's son, and the others get-down funky rock and soul. They also covered George Harrison's "If I Needed Someone," Bob Dylan's "I Shall Be Released," and the Rolling Stones' "The Last Time," artists who are all admitted influences of both brothers.

The stage instruments were unusually limited to strings and percussion, with Kevin playing the most varied numbers: harmonica, 12- and six-string guitars, bongos and assorted other ambiance-making percussions. Michael played both guitar and cello and seemed content to literally take the side stage to his younger brother's playing to the crowd, and reminded one in looks, sincerity and sound to a good-looking version of Harry Chapin.

The Ram's Head Live! tends to garble anything said by the performers, and the cavernous space detracts a slight bit from the great sound system, but Ram's Head brings top-notch acts to its Baltimore venue, old and new. Coming up: B-52's on 9/30; Busta Rhymes, 10/3; and Hall & Oates, 11/30. For tickets, call 410-244 1131.

Billy Idol set list 9/10/05

Super Overdrive

Dancing With Myself

Flesh For Fantasy

Body Snatcher

White Wedding

Scream

Eyes Without A Face

Sweet Sixteen

Plastic Jesus

Cherie

Louisiana

Rat Race

L.A. Woman

Evil Eye

World Comin' Down

Ready, Steady, Go!

Rebell Yell

Hot In The City

Kiss Me Deadly

Mony Mony

Bacon Brothers set list 9/16/05

I'd Write A Song

Woman's Got A Mind to Change

White Knuckles

Unhappy B-Day

Don't Lose Me Baby

Tuesday

Hasn't Got A Heart

Swing Low

If I Needed Someone

Strung Out

Baby Steps

Only A Good Woman

Peace Dance

The Last Time

I Shall Be Released

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