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## ODE TO IGGY

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by Sam Mills

*"Y'know, they may say that we're just DIRT...but we've got our feet planted firmly on the muthafuckin' ground!"  
--Iggy Pop, to the audience at the Fox Theatre, 4.13.07*

That was a show. Last time I went to a show that loud, that raucous, was...well, I don't remember. 30 years ago? The last time I saw Iggy? Probably. But the Fox, beautiful movie palace that it is, was packed to the gills with old Iggy fans--some young ones, too, but mostly my age or older: guys with suits, guys in biker leathers, women in miniskirts and platform shoes that shouldn't wear them any more--and more than a few who should; rockers, punkers (foot-high mohawks), junkers, bankers, boozehounds, barmaids, new brides, grandmas, grandads, jocks, glamfans with glitter and Ziggy Stardust still in their eyes, bodybuilders, glue sniffers gone clean, cleaning ladies that won the Lotto, burnouts and hot babes and first-timers, freeloaders and dudes and a couple of minor Detroit rock royalty around (such as Christine Komisarz, formerly of the 80s grrrl band Nikki and the Corvettes), hopheads and geeks and a couple of people in wheelchairs, and one guy with an oxygen tank. Up in the first row. I kid you not.

I take my seat before the first show--it's all reserved seating. My friends and I are scattered throughout; I'm sitting by myself in row R. And what >would< be the mosh pit is filled--with chairs. VIP seating? Who knows. But it's a sure bet that Fox management didn't want any moshpit action, so just sell it out.

First band is PowerTrane, Scott Morgan's new band. Scottie's been around since the early 60's, when he fronted the Rationals out of Ann Arbor, then played with Iggy, then later a bunch of bands including Sonic Rendezvous Band in the 80s with Fred "Sonic" Smith of MC5 fame, and PowerTrane is kicking it pretty good, I'm impressed, but the place is still half empty--everyone's waiting for Iggy. I grab a beer and return to my seat; I want to rest up.

8:50--only five minutes late--Iggy and the Stooges come on. Two of the three original Stooges are back with him after nearly 30 years: brothers Ron (guitar) and Scotty (drums) Asheton. Mike Watt is the new bassist, madly keeping his eye on every move Iggy makes, and Steve Mackay, tenor sax player who recorded on "Raw Power", comes on later in the set and blasts a mighty soundscape. But all eyes are on the Ig: just shoes, tight jeans that keep slipping down, and that's it--bare-chested, shoulder-length stringly blond hair and a look like he's still that wild kid, the wild child teen we all of us were at some point and still have in us to some degree, crazy whirling stomping and screaming away the bullshit of adult constrictions. And he cranks it up.

Actually, the whole band cranks it, so loud I can feel the bass on my heart, and my ears begin to ring almost from the start. Everyone stands and screams, and he starts doing the old hits first, like "I Wanna Be Your Dog," to which everyone sings, howls in response to Iggy...

"So messed up I want you here  
In my room I want you here  
Now we're gonna be face-to-face  
And I'll lay right down in my favorite place..."

"And now I wanna..." "...BE YER DOG!"  
"And now I wanna..." "...BE YER DOG!"  
"And now I wanna..." "...BE YER DOG!"

"Well Come on!"...

And he does his dives into the first couple of rows, but now he's got a crew of big guys who do nothing but immediately fish him out of the sea of bodies crushed up against the stage. By song five, "Real Cool Time", they do the "Invade the Stage" thing; about 100 people from the wings dash on stage and crawl on stage and jump and dance and writhe with Iggy--and just as quickly pushed off when the song's done. OK, got that over with, and it's full power for the rest of the show--even Iggy's showing his age, however; by the half-way mark he's limping (I learn later he's remarked about a bad right hip, probably arthritis) and this is only the first time I think that he's turning 60 the next week, but he's still kicking it steady and I'm jumping around, too, as much as I can while being squished between people and theatre seats. I jump. I holler. I forget to put the earplugs in. For awhile it doesn't matter, because all I'm doing is removing some

constrictions, even if only for an hour, if only in my little space between rows Q and S, if only right here, right now...

After the show I'm sitting on a trashcan in the lobby by the front doors, my ears ringing. I'm waiting for two different groups of friends that showed up: the crew from Lansing (about 6 people I know) and the folks from San Francisco/Detroit (including the infamous Babalou (babalou.com) and a couple who just moved back to Detroit after 20+ years in the Bay area). I'm wearing a long black leather jacket, and my beret-- yeah, I'm cool and so is everyone else, dammit. and this guy, maybe 35 or so, sorta looking like a older frat boy, walks toward me, puts out his hand and says "Hey Scott Morgan—man, your show was GREAT tonite!" and I look at him for a half a sec thinking is this guy too drunk or what but he's all seriousness: He thinks I'm the lead singer for PowerTrane. He's all grins as he continues "man, when I was at State, I picked up a copy of "Rock Action" and it blew me away, man..." and I'm goin Yeah, that was a good one, wasn't it and smiling and I look to my side and there's Babalou, who's come in for the show from S.F., and she's smirking at me like "oh, this guy is high on somethin'" and he goes on, "Yeah, when you and Iggy were together way back when, you really kicked it out, man, I'm so glad you're still on the scene..." and I realize this guy is not so drunk as he is sincere and sincerely confusing me with Scott Morgan and I shake his hand and Babalou's slappin' me on the back and goin' "Yeah, GREAT show there, Scotty! GREAT show!" and the guy heads off all smiles and Babalou looks at me and says "You should have sold him your autograph, Mr. Big Rock Star!"

Heh. Happens all the time, I say and outside Babalou and I meet up with the crew from Lansing and San Fran and Detroit exurbia. They all wanna go drinking so we head over to the Centaur, too loud but the martinis are ok and some of these people I haven't seen in 20 years, so we catch up until midnight, then 1 am, then 1:30 am....By the time I crash at my pad it's 2:40 Saturday morning and I know I'm going to be sleeping late into the morning...

Which I did. Now that the ringing is gone and my leg muscles have returned to their usual atrophied state (ok, I exaggerate) I'm thinking my concert-going from now on is going to be more like Yanni or Zamphir and his Pan Flutes or something--then again, maybe not. In any event, it was time to shake things loose, and kick a lot of stuff to the sky or the curb or just around a bit. It was time.

Coda:

Altho Iggy is not funk, I couldn't help thinking of the Funkadelic's freak anthem, "One Nation Under A Groove"...

Here's a chance to dance our way  
Out of our constrictions  
Gonna be freakin'  
Up and down the  
Hangup Alleyway  
With the groove our only guide  
We shall all be moved

Ready or not here we come  
Gettin' down on  
The one which we believe in:  
One nation under a groove  
(Can I get it on my good foot, good God)  
Gettin' down just for the funk of it  
('Bout time I got down one time)  
One nation and we're on the move  
Nothing can stop us now  
(Aye aye aye aye aye)  
Now that's an anthem I have no problem saluting....

— Sam

*What is to give light must endure burning. - Viktor Frankl*