

ENTERTAINMENT FEATURE

New Edition Concert: A Review

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With the ever growing popularity of DAT machines and over used samples of old school artists, it is hard to find the energy and atmosphere of an actual concert. Gone are the days of live sound, original dance steps and artists who actually give 100 percent to the audience.

"The New Edition Reunion Tour," which took place at the Greensboro Coliseum on January 17, goes against the norm of most '90s concerts and gives the audience what they received from concerts of the past - true entertainment and sound.

702, a Biv 10 / Motown act, opened the show with the traditional DAT machine/sample approach. The strength of these three females' voice's made up for the lack of live instrumentation. If this trio had the same atmosphere that surrounded the other acts they would have been on the same level. 702 gave a tight performance and really moved the crowd with their mega hit, "Steelo."

Blackstreet gave one of the "phatest" performances of the night, which had both a street and gospel feel to it. It was street because of the live hip hop beats that listeners 18-25-years-old can relate to. Blackstreet's performance was gospel in that they sang from the heart. Teddy Riley and Blackstreet brought the audience to its knees with past hits like "Joy" and "Before I let you Go," as well as their current hit single "No Diggity," which sounded fine even without West Coast producer/rapper Dr. Dre.

Keith Sweat presented his predictable show full of begging and whining. But what made the performance "phat" was Sweat's use of wardrobe, band, lights, and dancers to send all the females in the audience into a frenzy. Past and present hits such as "Make it last Forever," "I Give all My Love to You," "Nobody" and "Twisted," showed us that Keith Sweat is one of R & B's most superb performers. Although I have never been fond of Sweats's crying, sheep-like singing voice, I admired his determination and ability to move a crowd.

Before witnessing this concert, I was beginning to doubt New Edition's ability to move even it's most die hard fans. After this performance I no longer have these doubts. New Edition opened with a compilation of new and old hits. Those who grew up on New Edition appreciated the return to songs like "Cool it Now" "Mr. Telephone Man," "If it isn't Love" and "NE Heartbreak." The group also performed it's current hits,

"Home Again" and "Hit me Off."

After giving the crowd the best of New Edition, the solo acts and groups BBD, Ralph Tresvant, Johnny Gill and "bad boy" Bobby Brown performed songs from their solo projects.

Even with Whitney Houston at side stage, Bobby was his usual nasty, freaky self. His performance of "Get Away" and the mega hit "My Prerogative" reminded the audience of those days when Bobby was just plain bad. Let's face it, when you go to see a Bobby Brown show it isn't necessarily for the singing (which was average at best), but it's for the entertainment and shock value. As a matter of fact, that's exactly what the audience got.

Johnny Gill's endless rendition of his greatest hit "My My My," had all the females screaming. Hands down, Gill, the best and only true soul singer in New Edition, was both a vocalist and a showman. My only complaint is that he teased the audience with only one song. For the \$33 admission price paid by many attendees, "Mr. Gill" could have sung at least three hits.

BBD could never really rap and Rickey Bell's singing is questionable compared to others in his field, but I think what made BBD float rather than sink was the live band, dancers, and atmosphere the trio brought to the show. A lot like Keith Sweat and more so like Bobby Brown, it was the entertainment and shock value that brought the audience to their knees when BBD performed.

When I used to hear Ralph Tresvant sing I thought it was studio magic that made him so great. But after I saw the concert I knew it was true talent. Now don't get me wrong, Tresvant is no Luther Vandross, but after hearing the song "Sensitivity" it was refreshing to know the brother can hold his own.

The greatest part of the New Edition concert was their singing of classic material over keyboard accompaniment played by Chucki Booker. This was a test to show the true talent of each performer and it was a treat for everyone's ears.

It was a breath of fresh air to get back to what really makes a concert, originality, live music, good singing and artists who give 100 percent. In fact, the only problem that I and many others had with the concert was its price. Other than the \$33 admission, the concert was well worth it.

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