

Music

Midnight Oil burns up the stage with political message

Before Midnight Oil came to Raleigh for a stop on the Australian band's *Diesel and Dust* tour, it played in Washington, D.C., at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium last week.

The quiet Washington audience members were propelled out of their seats when Midnight Oil took over the stage after the opening band, House of Freaks. Midnight Oil crashed into its set with "Blue Aurora." From the start, vocalist Peter Garrett commanded the stage and riveted the audience's attention to him.

The stage lighting emphasized the band's attempt to involve the audience directly with the performance through white floodlights and

Robert Genadio Concert

crowd-sweeping spotlights punctuating "Progress." These effects, combined with Garrett's air of omnipotence and the loud, multi-layered power-chord attack, hinted at the fascist techniques of shock rock, but the lyrics made it clear that the effects served only to call attention to the band's political feelings.

Not only were the songs full of political content, such as the demand for better treatment of Australia's aboriginal population, but Garrett took the opportunity between songs

to preach his concerns directly.

He introduced "Dreamworld" by saying that Australia is not a Paul Hogan, a golf course or a place to catch rays, but really a place taken over by developers. After singing "We don't serve your country, don't serve your king" in "The Dead Heart," he lightly made fun of a fan waving an Aussie flag by pointing out the undesired presence of the Union Jack on it, calling him "a true follower of Georgetown fashions." The flag quickly disappeared.

Almost all of the new album *Diesel and Dust* was featured, with the songs' immediacy felt much more directly when played live. When Garrett sang about wanting to shed his skin on "Sell My Soul," the

audience half-expected to see it happen, watching his face contort and his neck bulge. He paused only in his stagewide dances to stand motionless on "Artic World," looking like a strange blue god under the deep hues projected by the light crew.

In the middle of an extended version of "The Power and the Passion," Garrett apologized for the omnipresent barrier between the stage and the audience, but then saved two young fans from the security staff and brought them onstage to dance through the rest of the song with him and close out the set.

Predictably, the encore was "Beds are Burning," but drummer Rob Hurst pummeled the song into a strong and chaotic end.

The band finished the evening with "Read About It," leaving many satisfied fans with plenty of diverse issues to muse on and many different songs still running through their heads.

Midnight Oil clearly proved its growing success has much more to do with its increased songwriting sophistication and its unrelenting energy onstage than with the I-love-Australia craze.

Reggae legend's son Ziggy Marley remains true to Jamaican sound

On his new album, *Conscious Party*, Ziggy Marley's voice closely approximates his father's — partly because of the true similarities between the two voices and partly because of the power of suggestion. But the sound similarities shouldn't really matter. What should matter is that Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers are reviving true reggae and making it a force in today's synth-glamour rock world of pop music.

The title *Conscious Party* is appropriate, as the songs beckon the listener not only to be aware of the ignorant and dangerous state of the world around him, but also to tap his foot and celebrate life's potential beauty.

The songs on *Conscious Party* seem to come in complementary pairs. "New Love," a wonderful and optimistic song, contrasts the realistic and cynical "Lee and Molly," a minor tune about an interracial relationship, "Tumblin' Down," which complains about current social and political problems, reflects the other side of "We Propose," which suggests ways of making the world a better place. Rastafarianism is reaffirmed in a pair of songs named "A Who A Say" and "Have You Ever Been To Hell." Ziggy's poetry is not meant for the uninvolved.

Marley has enough talent and meaty material to launch a reggae assault on the too-often complacent and formulaic content of FM radio

Michael Phillips Album

airwaves. Even rock icon Keith Richards is called in to leave his musical fingerprints on one of the tracks of Ziggy Marley's album.

The album's faults seem to rest in the production headed by Talking Heads bassist Tina Weymouth and drummer Chris Frantz. While *Conscious Party* would have worked best as a full-blast attempt at reinstating the power of reggae as a musical form, the Melody Makers are somewhat reduced on vinyl.

But the authentic reggae party still shines through, even trapped under an image of Jamaica as seen on a travel brochure. Weymouth and Frantz trail the white college student brand of funk and soul, and this trail

takes away some of the music's potential "punch."

But this problem isn't enough to make *Conscious Party* an ineffective collection of songs. There is enough of Ziggy Marley's true spirit and intention pouring out of stereo speakers to make the pop world sit up and take notice.

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