ARTS

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Mt. Joy celebrates 10th birthday of debut single in Westville

BY SARAH MU
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER



IVY LUO / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The indie rock band celebrated the release of their debut single 10 years to the day at a Tuesday night show in New Haven. The concert was part of the North American stretch of Mt. Joy's anniversary tour.

Westville Music Bowl filled with enthusiastic fans and colorful balloons on Monday night to celebrate 10 years since the release of Mt. Joy's debut single, "Astrovan."

The indie rock and folk band, which was founded in 2016 in Los Angeles, opened and closed its New Haven show with the hit song as part of its 10th anniversary tour.

"I love how grunge they are," Justin Fan '28, who attended the concert, said about the band. "I like the sort of rawness in some of the songs as well as the same of the psychedelic feelings that come with it. I think a lot of the stories they tell are very applicable in moral story — relating to romance, relating to freedom, relating to angst, but it sounds really good while they do it."

Fan said in a phone interview after the concert he is a fan of Mt. Joy because of its storytelling in songs like "Astrovan." He said that he interprets the lyric, "Jesus drove an Astrovan," as a reference to Carrie Underwood's hit "Jesus, Take the Wheel," and "about taking it slow and not necessarily worrying about the future."

Released on Sept. 22, 2016 — 10 years to the day before Monday — "Astrovan" garnered over two million streams on Spotify in its first month of debuting.

At the concert, Mt. Joy played original songs alongside covers of Grateful Dead and Creedence Clearwater Revival in front of swirling graphics and messages such as "Art is Human" and "Support Human Artists." Founded in 2016, Mt. Joy has nearly a decade of touring under its belt, along with three albums: "Mt. Joy," "Rearrange Us" and "Orange Blood."

Fans screamed out the lyrics to popular songs such as "Julia," "Sheep" and "Silver Lining." Julia Leventis, who traveled to the concert from Massachusetts, commemorated her birthday by watching Mt. Joy perform for the first time. Her friend, Rachel Pellis, who has been a fan of Mt. Joy for six years, said she had the tickets since December.

"It felt sort of ethereal," Leventis said. "Everyone was in their zone, but then towards the end it felt like we were coming together. I think my favorite part was just being able to share it with everyone, it felt really nice."

Pellis said she was "shocked" that the crowd was not dancing much during her favorite song "Lemon Tree" or throughout the concert.

"This crowd was standing still way too much," she said.

Towards the end of the night, Mt. Joy also sang a tribute song titled "Lucy" for a friend, who was diagnosed with multiple brain tumors, according to the lead singer Matt Quinn. Quinn told the audience to live life to the fullest and to remember to not take the little things for granted.

Vanessa Kirschner, a New Haven resident, said she typically listens to indie folk music and attended the concert with two of her friends.

"They played all the most popular songs and I feel like it was a good venue where you could dance and also just relax," Kaylee McCord, a friend of Kirschner's, said. "The instrumentals were so solid."

Katie Farkouh, another friend, thought the concert was fitting for the change of seasons.

"I feel like everyone's ready for fall coming and it just matched the atmosphere perfectly," said Farkouh.

Mt. Joy continued their tour Wednesday night at Thompson's Point in Portland, Maine and will perform Friday in Camden, New Jersey.

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Bikini Kill brings punk-rock roar back to New Haven

BY ASPYN KASKALLA
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Fans of all ages, from teenagers to longtime followers, crammed shoulder to shoulder in College Street Music Hall on Monday night for a performance by the feminist punk band Bikini Kill.

The concert marked the first time Bikini Kill has performed in New Haven since playing in the Morse College dining hall in March 1996. That show came one month before the band released its second studio album, "Reject All American" — a name whose political undertones reflect lead singer Kathleen Hanna's message to the crowd after commotion broke out in the pit on Monday.

"I want to connect with you all, but I can't understand what's going on on the floor," she said, pausing the set, after people began booing and pointing at someone in the audience.

With a "white supremacist in the White House," Hanna said, the last thing the room needed was more of that same hostility.

"We don't want to bring more misogynistic violence," she said. "We don't want to bring more transphobia. We don't want to bring more racism."

Formed in 1990, the band is known for its association with the underground punk "Riot Grrrl" movement that promoted female empowerment and pushed back against sexism.

Hanna asked the crowd on Monday to look out for each other and find some joy in the room together, before continuing the band's performance with "Don't Need You."

Artist Kilynn Lunsford opened for Bikini Kill, performing original songs including "Disney Girls." She told the crowd to support the punk band by buying their merchandise, noting that smaller acts like herself get to perform thanks to invitations from artists such as Bikini Kill.

"They're the reason bands like us get to do stuff like this," Lunsford said to the crowd.

Following a lengthy intermission, Bikini Kill took the stage, opening with "New Radio" and later performing hits like the popular "Rebel Girl" while audience members swayed and headbanged to the beat.

For older New Haven locals, the show carried extra weight. Patti Wilson, who has followed the band since its formation, said the city has a real claim to Bikini Kill's history due to New Haven's association with the punk scene.

Wilson said that when she was younger, New Haven was "the place to be," recalling the local punk hotspot Ron's Place and the years before Bikini Kill's rise.

She reflected on the shift the band caused in the genre, and said punk had started to feel "mechanical" and "cookie cutter" until Bikini Kill's "vibrant" arrival.

Bikini Kill formed in Olympia, Wash., in October 1990.



COURTESY OF GWYN WALLACE
The feminist punk band performed at College Street Music Hall on Monday night, its first show in New Haven since a performance in the Morse College dining hall in 1996. The lead singer's words to the crowd took on a political undertone.

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