

Exhibit captures local live music experiences

Written by Karen S. Chambers *Enquirer* contributor

Sep. 19, 2013 12:45 PM |

cincinnati.com

Reverberation – reverb – means echo, and it’s an apt title for the photographic exhibition in the Chidlaw Gallery at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Subtitled “Capturing The Live Music Experience,” the show is in tandem with next weekend’s MidPoint Music Festival.

The nearly 60 photos by 29 local photographers reverberate performances by rockers, and a smattering of blues and jazz musicians that have taken place in area stadiums and more intimate venues over the years.

The exhibition was organized by Jacob Drabik as an off-year presentation of FotoFocus, the biennial photographic extravaganza that debuted in 2012.

A photographer himself, Drabik said, “A good concert photographer can really capture a specific moment in time.”

It’s the “decisive moment” described by the great photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson: “Photography is not like painting. There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. . . . Oop! The Moment! Once you miss it, it is gone forever.”

But if the moment is caught, it lasts forever.

The concert photographer’s challenge is to capture not only the physical scene, but also its energy and intensity.

And Julie Huber’s “Billy Idol at The Shoe” at the Horseshoe Casino in June is nothing if not intense. You look up at the grizzled rocker, his lips pursed, his brow creased, his jawline firm. His right arm is outstretched, palm up, fingers separated. He looks like a conductor asking for more from his orchestra, or maybe an old-time revivalist.

Equally intense is Darrin Ballman’s portrait of Britta Phillips at The Emery in 2012.

But there’s no frenzy in the dramatically lit black-and-white print. Everything is lost in darkness except her face, gazing off to her left searchingly, and her hands on her guitar, claw-like on the frets and poised with pick in hand over the strings. The instrument’s edge is a highlighted zip against the black background.

Even more dramatic is Heather Wolking’s “Epic,” depicting K.I.L.R.O.Y. of the Protomen in a May 2013 gig at the Madison Theater. Dressed in a black shirt, he is silhouetted against a foggy background and a hazy widening spotlight. It illuminates his uplifted face, the light glinting off the golden mask he wears. Its features are angular, defined by planes, and expressionless. He thrusts his fist up defiantly in the air, in a “power to the people” gesture.

The starkness of the pose reminded me of Martha Graham, the Picasso of dance. Her choreography has been described as “powerful, dynamic, jagged and filled with tension.” Ditto for “Epic.”

Most photographs here bring the viewer within touching distance to the performer, but Steve Ziegelmeier's photo of Muse at U.S. Bank Arena in February is shot as if from the middle of the audience. You see the entire stage with the three musicians spaced evenly and widely separated.

Yellow and blue spotlights streak like searchlights strafe the huge arena. An upside down pyramid-form hovers above the stage like a starship and images of the band performing are projected onto it.

Standing at a distance, from the relative vantage point of Ziegelmeier, you can't discern the features of the musicians. But step up to the photo, and, unexpectedly, you see them in crisp detail. It's like a two-fer: the ambience of the venue and portraits of the performers in action.

It succeeds in doing what Drabik says a good photograph should do when you look at it, that is ". . . smell the spilled beer, feel the bass pulsing in your chest and hear the ringing in your ears."

Reverberation should whet your appetite for the 12th annual MidPoint Music Festival. It kicks off its three-day run on Thursday. More than 170 musical acts will perform at 15 venues in Over-the-Rhine and Downtown. For more information: www.mpmf.com.

If You Go

What: Reverberation: Capturing The Live Music Experience

Where: Chidlaw Gallery, Art Academy of Cincinnati, 1212 Jackson St., Over-the-Rhine

When: 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, through Sept. 29; reception 6-8 p.m., Friday, RSVP: sarahk@fotofocuscincinnati.org

Admission: Free

What did you think about this article? [Send us your feedback.](#)

[Activate](#) your account today and get the most from your subscription. Not a subscriber? [Get started now.](#)