

Photographic Memories

'Reverberation' exhibit showcases evocative live music photography during MidPoint



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Steve Ziegelmeyer's photo of Muse earlier this year at U.S. Bank Arena is included in 'Reverberation.'

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ight a picture be worth a thousand songs?

It's possible that a photograph, as much as an MP3 player full of tunes or a head full of memories, is the best way to recall attending a concert by a favorite act. Not just something shot far from the stage on your shaky iPhone,

but rather the kind of image that an inspired photographer — with media access and lots of skill — can take up close.

Those who attend *Reverberation: Capturing the Live Music Experience*, a photo exhibit at Over-the-Rhine's Art Academy of Cincinnati (1212 Jackson St.), during the MidPoint Music Festival, will get a chance to test that theory. The Art Academy is staying open for extended hours so festival goers can see this free show — 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The exhibit will also be up Sunday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Some of these 56 color and black-and-white images from 29 local and regional photographers so vividly capture what it's like to see a spellbinding musician in action that you'll swear you were at the show just by looking. And if you were at that specific event, you'll swear you're *still* there.

For instance, I was at Dean & Britta's spooky, ethereal concert at a chilly Emery Theatre last November, when the duo performed *13 Most Beautiful: Songs for Andy Warhol's Screen Tests* as images from Warhol's short films showed alongside them.

Darrin Ballman's dreamy black-and-white photo of a pensive guitar-playing Britta Phillips, her shaggy, light hair providing divine illumination, instantly put me back at that intimate concert. And it should make others realize the magic they missed.

Those at U.S. Bank Arena in February for Muse's grandeur-filled concert will feel the same way after seeing Steve Ziegelmeyer's thrilling color photograph, shot from a fish-eye perspective, that makes it look as if the British AltRock band was performing under the illuminated mother ship from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Folks who went to Washington Park in April to see Midnight Star, an R&B group with regional origins, will probably feel the same way from James Jenkins' shot of determined bassist Kenneth Gant. And the excitement that is part of bass

saxophonist Colin Stetson's barrier-breaking, avant-garde performances comes roaring right through *CityBeat* contributor Keith Klenowski's color portrait of him at the 2010 MusicNow festival.

Same, too, for those who were at Over the Rhine's set at the 2006 Tall Stacks Music, Arts & Heritage Festival after admiring Michael Wilson's evocative photograph, which captures the crowd size. For past MidPoint attendees, former *CityBeat* art/design director Sean Hughes' portrait of Death on Two Wheels' Daniel Gleason, his hair a blur of movement, will bring back memories of the 2010 edition.

"I think this show illustrates how incredibly important that drama (of a live concert) is," says Jacob Drabik, a music photographer (and designer/print production manager at Lightborne Communications) who curated this show for FotoFocus. "Everyone's experience at a show will be different. And 90 percent of that is how engaged you are visually — if you're distracted, you will not have the same experience as if you're in the front row.

"With this (photo) show, the work really puts you in the front row. You get a visceral feel for what it was like right when that shot was taken. And anybody who has ever been to a really great live show can relate to that."

FotoFocus is a nonprofit organization whose primary function is to stage a citywide biennial photography exhibition. It was founded by Lightborne owner (and a former *CityBeat* owner) Tom Schiff. It first was held last year and plans for the 2014 event are already underway.

But FotoFocus Director Mary Ellen Goeke also wanted to do something between biennials and a tie-in with MidPoint made sense. Thus, *Reverberation* was born.

"We thought it would be good to have one show this year that reaches out to a different audience than our typical clientele from last year," Drabik says. "We thought MidPoint would be a really good fit. It attracts a younger crowd, but it's

people who actually will come out to arts events and really enjoy themselves. It's a very energetic crowd."

The decision was made about eight months ago and Drabik put out a call to photographers he knew. He ended up curating from about 150 submissions and used some of his own work to fill what he saw as narrative holes in the exhibition.

While many of *Reverberation's* photographs are fairly recent, there is one from 1988 — former *CityBeat* staff photographer Jymi Bolden's portrait of Aretha Franklin at U.S. Bank Arena. when it was still called Riverfront Coliseum.

There are photos from large outdoor shows, such as Drabik's exciting shot of Foxy Shazam's outrageous frontman Eric Sean Nally singing from atop a drum set at the 2012 Bunbury Music Festival. And there are also ones from much smaller, non-rock venues, such as Mel Grier's color photograph of Charlie "Bunns" Wilson playing piano at a 2006 Jazz at the Hyatt session or Michael A. Kearns' arresting look at members of the Ed Moss Trio playing at the homey Schwartz's Point Jazz club in Over-the-Rhine.

One of the show's interesting aspects is how the older rockers, who one might think would look pretty silly still trying to keep up appearances, continue to be ready for their close-ups. Paul Stanley, in full Kiss regalia and 60 when David Sorcher's photograph of him was taken last year, looks set to charge into battle

... and win. Alice Cooper, 65, looks positively regal in his red-and-black-striped jacket and thick black eye makeup, holding up a stick as sparks fly behind him in Kelly Painter's shot from this summer at Horseshoe Casino.

"Those older guys still around are consummate entertainers," Drabik says. "They just know how to perform really well. The older acts still around are there because they're so good."

REVERBERATION:

CAPTURING THE LIVE MUSIC EXPERIENCE is on display at Art Academy of Cincinnati's Chidlaw Gallery and closes Sunday. More info: artacademy.edu.