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Fruition & Brad Parsons 1.11.19

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Asheville Music Hall

Asheville, NC

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The two most common ways I've heard people attempt to categorize Fruition are as a "bluegrass" act or as a "jamband." Despite the fact that Mimi Naja does play a mandolin on a good number of Fruition's songs, the "bluegrass" label couldn't be farther from accurate. Similarly, while guitarist Jay Cobb Anderson does indeed lead them into exploratory places from time to time, they're not really your traditional "jamband" either.



Fruition rolled into Asheville this past Friday night and worked their magic to an Asheville Music Hall that was bursting at the seams with live music lovers. They used a pair of their most popular tunes "Labor Of Love" and "The Meaning" to bookend a two-hour set that did its best to prove that their particular brand of music defies the constricts of the labels people tend to place on their music.

I mean don't get me wrong there were moments when that "bluegrass" label seemed spot on. They did a version of "Mountain Annie" with guest fiddler Zebulon Bowles that proved they do indeed have roots in mountain string band music. There were also moments the "jamband" label was appropriate. During "Dirty Dirty Thieves" they got downright psychedelic, and during the title track to their new album *Fire* they got as lost in the music as a band possibly can.

However, they were also so much more than that. For instance during a perfectly executed version of "Above The Line" they easily could've been classified as a reggae band. If we were to judge them based on tunes like "Santa Fe" or "Northern Town" it would've made sense to label them as a folk band. There were moments that Mimi Naja used her voice and Jay Cobb Anderson his guitar, to channel the kind of sounds that would have fit perfectly in a back-room blues club in Chicago. If we looked towards Kellen Asebroek's "Turn To Dust" in our attempt to define them I suppose it wouldn't have been hard to throw them under the "Indie Rock" umbrella. If we went solely on the version of "Montana" they did with special guest (and opening act) Brad Parsons "Americana" would've been the label to use. There were moments they were a country band and others they were a pop act. There were slow quiet moments as well as loud raucous moments.



I think that diversity of styles is one of the major factors that has seen Fruition grow from an unknown local band in the Pacific Northwest into one of the hottest club sized acts on the live music scene today. Over the course of their ten-year career they have truly grown to be amazing songwriters while not pigeonholing themselves into a certain sound. Over that time they've also blossomed into amazing musicians. Bass player Jeff Leonard and drummer Tyler Thompson are a ridiculously tight rhythm section. Jay Cobb Anderson is as animated a guitarist as I've seen in quite some time and he has the licks to back up the persona. Kellen Asebroek has the ability to play either acoustic guitar or keyboards depending on what the feel of each song calls for. The same can be said for Mimi Naja with her electric guitar and her mandolin.



A good live band can keep their audience wondering what is going to happen next and that is precisely what Fruition did on multiple occasions during their Asheville performance. In this writer's opinion the show lacked the levels of intensity that some Fruition performances have reached, but what it lacked in energy it more than made up for in precision ...

... Ok ... wait ... what you've been reading above is my third attempt at this article. I am currently resisting the urge to delete this version like I did the first two. As a writer it is hard to muster up the enthusiasm to write a review of a show that you weren't really all that

keen on. I am not going to erase it though. I am going to submit it and if you are reading this now it must have been published. Don't get me wrong Friday night's show wasn't a bad show, at least not musically. As a matter of fact it wasn't anything Fruition themselves did that made the show less enjoyable.

On second thought, I suppose it was partially their fault for bringing along Brad Parsons and Starbird as their opening act. To be honest following that band every night has to be a near impossible task. Starbird is one of the more interesting live bands making the rounds these days. They have a refreshing sound that is a treat to experience. Brad Parsons is easily one of the most under-appreciated songwriters I've heard in years. He does things with lyrics that very few wordsmiths can. Throw Brad Parsons & Starbird together and they are unstoppable. The double guitar attack from Brad Parsons and Justin Mazer paired with the rhythm section of Dylan Skursky and Al Smith put on an hour-long clinic on how a Rock & Roll show should be. There were Neil Young-esque feedback jams filled with psychedelic distortion. There was a Zebulon Bowles sit in that produced some of the eeriest sounds I've ever heard a fiddle and guitar make. There was rockabilly stand-up bass playing and acoustic style finger-picking being done on electric guitars. All the while showcasing some of the most beautiful, emotional, soul searching words you've ever heard in your life. With Cabinet on hiatus and American Babies seemingly shelved for now, it seems like the Starbird guys will have plenty of free time to dedicate to this recent Brad Parsons collaboration. If these four gentlemen all keep at this project, they should be a force to be reckoned with for many years to come.



That part was unavoidable for Fruition. I mean it's not their fault they were musically outshined on this particular night. Besides there were only twenty-five or thirty of us that were even paying attention to the opening act. Most people hadn't even bothered to show up yet. Those that had were too busy getting a jump start on their alcohol intake over at the bar. Which leads me to the real reason I wasn't feeling the show the other day. Drunks. I mean for the most part I'm a fairly reasonable guy. I realize it's not up to me to dictate to others how to take their ride. I

just wish that some people were more aware of their surroundings. I wish some people realized that their actions may impact those around them. I wish some people realized the middle of the dance floor is not the best place to have a fifteen-minute conversation. I wish that more people were ... ya know ... there for the music. Don't get me wrong, I know most people really do try to be respectful to the bands that are up there playing their hearts out for us. I truly believe most people attempt to be respectful to the other fans that are trying to enjoy their experience. I just wish more of those type of people had showed up at the Fruition concert the other night. I wonder if the band felt it too. I hope not. If so, on behalf of Asheville, I'm sorry Fruition. Hopefully next time we will be the respectful audience you deserve.

Scott's Photo Gallery

www.fruitionband.com/

www.bradparsonsband.com/