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| |  | | --- | | wordplay by Jon Lister images courtesy Kevin Estrada  Greatest hits tour, victory lap, multi-date eulogy. It’s difficult to place the most shocking (and simultaneously most exciting) reunion in rock music going, Alice in Chains, into a specific category, because perhaps it’s all three. No new album for Alice in Chains (save for a greatest hits double disc, The Essential Alice in Chains, released September 5th), though that certainly hasn’t impeded the ticket buying frenzy or the expanding string of dates.  However, a reunion tour can’t avoid mention of the band’s late lead singer, Layne Staley. Are the fans so anxious to see the boys up on stage again that they’ll accept just about any guy under center, as long as the three remaining members are up there? So far every show’s been a sell out, so that answer is a sizeable yes.   “We’re gonna take it like we always did, and we’ve always made it up as we’ve gone along,” says Jerry Cantrell, once again hammering out solos and vocal melodies to some of the most lasting anthems of the grunge era. There’s the ‘g’ word, hard to get away from. Though born out of the explosive Seattle scene along with the holy trinity of grunge; Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Nirvana, Alice’s sound bore uniqueness within the industry genre. Cantrell’s classic rock influenced guitar, combined with Staley’s dungeon growl produced a dark and surprisingly melodic strain of Seattle grunge from the noir-ish "Rooster" to the heroin-tinged “Down in a Hole” to the sweeping “I Stay Away.” From the radio standpoint, it’s hard to tell Alice in Chains ever parted ways. Since Staley died in 2002 after a long battle with drug addiction, though, it’s a gang of four minus one.   “We’re not trying to replace Layne,” says drummer Sean Kinney, “We want to play these songs one more time…I don’t know how long it will go or where it will take us. It’s kind of a tribute to Layne and our fans, the people who love these songs.” If you didn’t already know, the man handling Staley’s vocal parts is William Duvall, the front man for Comes with the Fall (who toured with Cantrell’s Degradation Trip who, incidentally, have a new album ready to go but are waiting for Duvall to finish with this current tour) who has the steely wail that meshes very well with Cantrell’s low end harmonies. But Duvall is a bandage at best. And when you look at the situation, it’s the best moment and way for the band to return.  “If you were looking at how to really capitalize on this experience and really make dough and make it a profitable thing, a band might, you know come out with a singer, have a record ready and all that. But that’s not where we’re coming from with this thing. We’re coming from a place of ‘It feels good, and we’re having a good time, so we’d like people to be a part of that.’” Cantrell is right; if the band wanted to make some cash, they’re going about it all wrong, at least it’s not like The Eagles’ “Hell Freezes Over Tour” where they’re fighting and bickering in the elevator an hour before the first concert. So the guys just want to play, and I’m not blaming them. Hell, I’m trying to get a ticket for their show at The Fillmore on November 20th because, by all indications, it could be last time the band will roll through the area, and this band is too groundbreaking, too iconic not to see -- in any venue. | |