

ELP *Review*

by Tom Robotham

I've been to a lot of good concerts in my life. (I've seen Emerson, Lake and Palmer three times). But the one I experienced last night at the Field House was, without a doubt, the best. The question is, why?

The fact that on this most recent tour--and consequently, last night--they played virtually every major work they ever created as a group certainly had a lot to do with the concert's success. But obviously, it was mostly the quality of their collective performances, and their individual ones, that brought feelings of orgasmic intensity to nearly five thousand people.

After opening the concert with a relatively new addition to their repertoire, the group went into their traditional opening, known as "Hoedown" (adapted from Aaron Copland's "Rodeo"). And from there they continued on a familiar path, playing a partially improvised version of "Tarkus" and filling such pieces as "Take a Pebble" and the majestic "Pictures at an Exhibition" with more extensive improvisations.

Throughout this portion of the concert Keith Emerson mesmerized the crowd with his performances on the grand piano, and this, I think, is especially worth reflecting on; for it is largely these performances that thrust the group onto such a high artistic plane. There are other rock groups around that seem to possess a lot of the synergetic qualities of ELP. But not one group, past or present, has done the job of bridging the classical-popular gap that ELP has.

Sporadically throughout the concert Greg Lake also soothed the audience with his resonant voice. The rest of the time he spent on stage, Lake was taking care of the guitar music. He played bass, and six and twelve string electric guitars; but perhaps the most beautiful of all his songs was done on the Ovation acoustic. It was called, "Lucky Man".

Carl Palmer was the last of the trio to dominate the stage. And that he did. He may not be the best percussionist on today's contemporary music scene; but he comes damn close. And there is little question that he is the most spectacular. Surrounded by drums, gongs and cymbals, Palmer sat on a revolving mini-stage which enabled him to not only execute a number of traditional type solos, appear to experience a metamorphosis of sorts from an English rock drummer to a savage percussionist straddling golden tympanies.

So where do we stop. There's so much to be said about a group of this magnitude that it is hard to feel you've covered enough. If not, what was missed will at least be carried around in the hearts of people here for a long, long time. But just one final note about another group. Whatever credibility the Concert Committee may have lost in the past, they surely regained it ten-fold last night. To them, I say, congratulations and thank-you.