

**LABELLE  
PARAMOUNT  
January 30, 2009**

**GET YOUR, GET YOUR YA YA HERE**



The Island-Life Music Coordinator secured tix for the Labelle reunion concert at the venerable Oaktown Paramount Theatre.

This tour marks the first tour for the fabled, ground-breaking R&B group in well over 30 years.

Labelle, consisting of Nona Hendryx, Sarah Dash and Patti LaBelle erupted upon the Motown scene with a fusion of disco, funk, gospel and glam rock, all infused with extraordinary R&B ensemble vocal harmonies. Their subject matter, written substantially by songwriter Hendryx, covered racism, sexism and highly charged erotic themes.

Their stage shows were legendary for the outlandish, space-age costumes, and often featured multiple changes through the extended sets.

After a scant five albums, the last two resulting in commercial flops, the group informally disbanded as Hendryx pursued a career in to avant garde jazz and Patti pursued a solo diva career.

Recent National events and a renewed enthusiasm for Black culture in the People, have revealed that the time is right for Labelle to return in triumph.

Friday night, that they did, with an extended standing ovation from the adoring salt and pepper crowd that roared out even before the band had played single note.

The applause grew more enthusiastic as the trio launched into the very first number, "Miss Otis Regrets," a decades-old Labelle tune featured on the newly-released reunion album "Back to Now."

Backed by a nine-piece band with percussion, drums, guitar, bass, keyboards and 88-key piano as well as three backup singers, the group propelled

the entire hall into a gospel-tent fervor. This was Oaktown, after all, the place where Labelle is best loved and remembered.

Of course ability has a lot to do with it, besides sentiment. Patti Labelle is arguably one of the greatest female vocalists to have lived, and is often counted in the stars among the likes of Arethra, Ella Fitzgerald, Maria Callas, or anybody in the Pantheon.

According to Richard Harrington, reviewer for the Contra Costa Times, "She proved once again that she is one of the greatest vocalists of all time, on equal par, in terms of sheer talent and ability, with Ella, Aretha or anybody else you want to mention. Her voice sounded so strong at times that it gave this reviewer chills."



There are few vocalists who can punch through a nine-piece band with such power that the rafters ring and the band's volume is rendered irrelevant.

But such power has its costs and Time has its demands. As the 100 minute set proceeded, it became clear that Patti was becoming fatigued between songs, taking the opportunity to sit when possible and lean on the piano. It was as if the Icon maxxed out every cell and every iota of energy for each number, needing a few minutes to recharge the batteries.

"We need the fan turned on," she huffed and puffed between numbers, trying to balance herself on six-inch spikes. "I'm menopausal, diabetic, 64 and everything is all right by me."

By contrast, the svelte Nona Hendryx came on wearing a skin-tight leather outfit that displayed a very fit and very sexy athletic figure. Nona, at least as old as Patti, looked easily to be about twenty-eight years of age, which is no small feat to achieve for anybody. She is certainly an inspiration.

Nevertheless, she and the group were clearly jazzed by the turn of recent political events and the election of Obama, the first Black President.

The crowd obliged with help by sending bouquets of flowers and gifts up to the stage as the performers regained breath.

At one point, during the obligatory rendition of "Lady Marmalade", the group called three guys from the audience to sing along with the tune. One fellow could not remember the lyrics, so he simply sang along with the melody, "I love you! I love you!"

Whatever. It worked, funnily enough.

One thing about Labelle, is that despite the outlandish showbizness aspect, they always have featured a very inclusive component of their identity, which has remained an endearing and attractive part of their overall presentation through the years. It's as if to say, we don't care what you look like or sound like, or who you are, you are all welcome.

As for Richard Harrington, the Contra Costa Times reviewer, we feel we need to provide a little instruction to the boy.

"Lady Marmalade" is a song about a whore. No mincing words here. What Richard finds as "nonsensical lyrics" can be translated as follows: "Get your, get your ya ya here. Mocha chocolate latte ya ya. Enjoy this brown skin girl, White Boy. Get your, get your ya ya here." There may also be a reference to anal sex as well, but we leave that up to the imagination. Its basically a doorway hooker's call essentially unchanged for the past five thousand years.

Okay Richard, you are a nice boy, and such things are not part of your world. We hope we don't have to do this again. We really hope we do not have to be more obvious, as if you just do not get it, well, do the Humpty Dumpty dance and leave us alone.

We do agree Patti has the most extraordinary voice bar none. And we congratulate Mr. Harrington on being the sole mainstream reviewer in the Bay Area to appreciate what happened Friday night. We do have to give the man a lot of credit for that.

Set List:

“Miss Otis Regrets”  
“Get You Somebody New”  
“Messin’ With My Mind”  
“Superlover”  
“Good Intentions”  
“Without You in My Life”  
“You Turn Me On”  
“Candlelight”  
“Rollout”  
“Lady Marmalade”

(Interlude medley/costume change)

“Hollywood Suite Prelude”  
“Come Into My Life”  
“Are You Lonely?”  
“Come Into My Life” reprise/”(Can I Speak to You Before You Go to) Hollywood?”  
“Get You Somebody New”  
“Somebody Somewhere”  
“System”  
“Isn’t It a Shame”  
“Nightbird”

Encore:

“What Can I Do For You?”