

Unity Tour: 311, Offspring, Pepper, Red Rocks, Morrison, July 20, 2010.

by Tim Van Schmidt

You couldn't have stopped this party even if you tried. That's the impression the Unity Tour 2010 left last night at Red Rocks when three major party bands- Pepper, the Offspring and 311- took the stage. Forget the rain and wind, this wasn't about staying dry or hanging out comfortably. This was about waving your arms around, yelling a little and happily bobbing up and down and back and forth to whatever beat was supplied. The crowd itself made this concert exciting.

This isn't to say there weren't any fireworks on stage. Pepper started it off with their strong, reggae-inspired rock, all the while informing the crowd that they would act as their "alcohol lifeguards" for the night. The Offspring dispensed with any goofy posturing and just got to business with their high-energy, punky rock. 311 closed the night with hip hop rock and their own take on reggae influences, perhaps putting the most of themselves into their performance as that night's headliners.

Still, there were times with all three bands that I got the feeling that they were kind of mailing in their stage time. There were some attempts by the bands to make contact with the amped up crowd, but often comments like "this is a special night" and "you're the best crowd of the tour" sounded kind of insincere.

But what this night lacked in riveting stage presence was made up for by the music itself. The Offspring in particular have a great thing going with their songs and arrangements- so much so they made trotting out piledriving rhythms and irreverent lyrics look easy. 311 wasn't afraid to let things drift a little throughout their set, including some slower, more meandering pieces in between the hardhitting double vocal hip hop-influenced stuff, creating a nice balance.

None of the particulars seemed to bother the crowd, though, who seemed determined to party all night long, no matter which band was on stage. That's really where the "unity" comes in for this tour- the fans were united in their quest to have a great time despite a gentle yet insistant rain that fell throughout the first half of the show. I saw happy, dancing people everywhere around me and whether the showmanship on stage was sincere or not didn't matter. As long as the crowd had the fuel to move, they kept it up with a hedonistic intensity that spelled success for the evening.