

Alice Cooper leads Clearwater through a wild night of amplified rock

His schtick now includes a stab at selfie culture.

BY GABE ECHAZABAL — NOV 8, 2019 12 PM



PHOTO BY CAESAR CARBAJAL

If I were to tell you that the wildest night I've had in quite a while was led by a 71-year old, chances are you wouldn't believe me.

Then again, [Alice Cooper](#), the long-standing and undisputed father of shock rock is no ordinary septuagenarian. Thrilling and tantalizing rock and roll audiences for the better part of the last fifty years, the master performer shows no signs of slowing down while keeping his tongue firmly planted in cheek.

Cooper brought his traveling show to the newly-refurbished and revamped [Ruth Eckerd Hall](#) in Clearwater on Thursday night in support of his "Ol' Black Eyes is Back" tour and dazzled a capacity crowd with his spectacle of a rock and roll show.

Photos: [Shock rock king Alice Cooper playing Clearwater's Ruth Eckerd Hall](#)

Kicking into gear early in the evening and without the aid of an opening act, Cooper unveiled an elaborate, multi-tiered stage which resembled an ancient, spooky castle and wasted no time getting the audience into the thrill ride that was just commencing.

Opening with his 1991 hit "Feed My Frankenstein," Cooper — sporting tight leather pants, flowing white peasant shirt, top hat and cane — sounded strong and powerful from the onset of the evening. Backed by a high octane, fiery band that boasted three guitarists (including blonde bombshell and shredder [Nita Strauss](#)), Cooper and his energetic backing group showed no remorse for the volume it pumped out and seemed overly proud to let it blare.

Running through a variety of classic hits, selections from his '80s and '90s resurgence and some unexpected deep cuts, Cooper wisely rolled out a setlist that appealed to his longtime fans as well as to those who discovered the rock veteran courtesy of his hilarious film appearance in the 1992 blockbuster comedy, "Wayne's World."



Wiry, agile, spry and full of spirit, Cooper appeared to savor every moment of his over the top and highly visual display like the true artisan he is. With a stage full of props, outlandish, oversized mobile caricatures and a light show that rivaled any I've ever witnessed, Cooper gives his audience its money's worth and then some.

Wielding a sword at times, Cooper's menacing persona was most effective when belting tunes like 1971's "Dead Babies" while holding a floppy baby doll or when clad in a straightjacket while creeping his way through the eerie "Steven" from his 1975 debut solo album, *Welcome to My Nightmare*.

A nod to modern day annoyances and in an attempt to take a jab at today's selfie culture, after a pair of seemingly giggly teenage girls appeared onstage out of nowhere and proceeded to take cellphone pics of themselves amid the backdrop, one of the evening's many ghoulish figures emerged and swiftly slashed the throat of one of the young ladies in response which drew a huge roar from the audience that was on its feet for most of the night.

Cooper wheeled out his longtime gimmicks like the faux guillotine that always appears to really chop his head off mid-show but, somehow, the shtick he's presented since the '70s came across as genuinely fresh and original.

The 90-minute show seemed to whiz by in a flash but was nonetheless punctuated by plenty of highlights including a mind-blowing solo from ace drummer Glen Sobel and a gritty, chugging version of Cooper's 1971 breakthrough anthem "I'm Eighteen."

Closing the night with a raucous version of his ode to the last day of classes, "School's Out," Cooper's guitarists seemed to crank their amps up just a bit and delivered a sizzling version of the heavy metal classic. While massive balloons emerged from the wings of the stage and made their way to the stage, Cooper quickly stabbed them all with his sword to release a barrage of confetti that was stuffed inside which ended the show on an adrenaline-filled note.

Alice Cooper's legion of dedicated fans come to his shows year after year to sing along loudly, pump their fists, marvel at the always incredible and elaborate stage décor and laugh at the sheer comedy of his shows and, for the duration of this highly entertaining performance, they all got plenty of opportunities to do so.