

Review: Blue Man Group at Universal Studios

in Concert Review

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BMG will get you gooey

Michelle F. Solomon

The Blue Man Group

Saturday, September 15, 2007

Universal Studios Citywalk, Orlando

Better Than: Late night TV's stupid human tricks.

The **Blue Man Group** has been a staple of Greenwich Village for almost two decades. I saw them a few years ago at the tiny Astor Place Theater. It really was one of those shows you'd only find in a Pop-Tart box sized place in New York City. The intimate setting of the rundown theater (the arm of my seat fell off midway through the performance) made the show all the more fun.

The Blue Man Group has graduated since their humble beginnings. Now with shows in residence in Boston, Chicago, Las Vegas, Amsterdam and even Berlin, the trio of shiny blue characters adds another notch in the PVC pipe by taking up residence in Orlando at Universal Studios.

Housed in the Sharp Aquos Theater (a far cry from Astor Place; here you won't find stadium seats where arms fall off), the Blue Man Group's Stage 18 used to be where they filmed Nickelodeon shows for most of the 1990s. It's fitting since BMG shares Nickelodeon's affinity for goo.

The three alien-like men, who don't speak and whose faces are covered with shiny blue masks, spew so much goo and other substances that there are actually Poncho rows, where I happily sat. If you're planning on seeing BMG, definitely spend the extra bucks to be parked in the Poncho section. A complimentary plastic rain poncho is hung on the back of your seat to keep you away from various items that are thrust from the stage into the first 20 rows – a Jell-O mold sprung from a

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board barely missed my head.

While the antics tend to be a little ridiculous at times – lots of audience members being brought to the stage and enlisted to perform inconsequential tasks like helping the hapless men figure out how to eat a Twinkie with a knife and fork – the Blue Men are actually true percussionists at heart. Most of the actors cast in the shows in the U.S. and abroad have serious drumming experience. The show's current captain in Orlando, Tampa-born Anthony Parrulli, has a background in drum and bugle corps. Experimental music is at the core of Blue Man Group along with custom musical instruments, including strings, airpoles and tubes made from PVC. In the current incarnation, there's more musical power with the five-piece Blue Man Group Band raised above the stage in a loft setting. A killer band on their own, they prefer RESTAURANTS uments.

The show opened June 6 and continues to pack in the crowds. Despite the fact that it's suitable for all ages because of its location in a theme park, the show still manages to maintain its nightclub feel, especially when you can buy an aptly fitting blue Jell-O shot that comes in an injectable plastic tube for \$5. Alcohol definitely included. – Michelle F. Solomon

Critics Notebook

Personal Bias: As soon as I got on the turnpike, I cranked up the iPod and listened to Blue Man Group's debut album "Audio" from 1999. While their heads are filled with mush, their hearts are definitely deeply techno.

Random Detail: Parulli, mentioned above, married his wife, Kate, on live television for TLC's A Wedding Story and was a contestant on Wheel of Fortune.

By the Way: If you can't make it to Orlando to see the show right away, no worries. It looks like it's in for a long run. They perform five days a week.

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Evola says:

The writer nailed what BMG is all about. Good Job!

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