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Meridene's Farewell Show /w Laarks + The Heart Pills

by BRENDON HERTZ on Feb 15, 2012 • 11:38 am

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Hope. The finality and open-endedness of the word set the tone for Meridene's farewell show at the House of Rock last Saturday, a cold night in the beginning of February. Not long ago, Meridene had parted ways (seemingly for good), members of Laarks vanished into the anonymity of larger cities, and The Heart Pills looked as if they might live on the laurels of their first handful of tunes for years to come.

Saturday night turned all of this on its head as The Heart Pills took the stage, opening with new songs and powerful, confident renditions of old standbys alike, including newbie "Concrete," a rhythm-driven stomper, and "Bus Ride," a crowd favorite for its sing-along chorus. The Heart Pills seemed reenergized after a recent short tour, which included stops in nearby exotic locales: Oshkosh, Wausau, Chicago. An irony of sorts, this parting show was definitely a homecoming welcome to members of The Heart Pills.

Things would turn to farewells within the hour, as Laarks crooned out a high energy set as well. The bar had been set, the amicable gauntlet thrown, as each individual knew that this was a special weekend for music in Eau Claire, for themselves. Ian Jacoby didn't miss a beat in picking up where the Laarks left off: sideways smiling at the crowd, fully aware that, while his bandmates were dressed in suits, he was happy to let his keys, voice, and hooded sweatshirt do the proverbial talking. Of course, the other folks in the band didn't let their clothes do the talking either. Guitar, drums, and bass all interweaved into fabrics of musical alt-pop goodness. These songs seemed to call out, "We're back, maybe for one night, but who knows?" Eau Claire has a funny way of sending people out into the world and then drawing them back, like some enigmatic cosmic yo-yo, and that's what this night was all about leading up to the final hurrah.



Only in Eau Claire is one able to become close friends with talented musicians who run the gamut from internationally touring to local legend to high school upstart to virtually unknown house party novelty act. The result is a closely knit conversation between audience and band, the line between performer and listener blurred, where the band no longer is some faceless entity but a group of your most intimate friends. Honestly, this writer has only seen Meridene a handful of times, but, as the last adieu unfolded, I could tell that this was the magic that has drawn music aficionados to the band over the last few years. Lead singer/guitarist Trevor has a way of captivating his audience with part rockstar, part endearing cousin, and, as the night faded into wee twilight hours, Meridene became something more than just a band; it became an extended family full of inside jokes, awkward moments, a deep history of lives intermingled forever.



However, there were no tears shed when last call came, when the music was finished. As the stage cleared, band members casually packed up instruments in cases, and audience members pattered out into the streets, there were only smiles on everyone's faces: smiles of satisfaction, smiles of fulfillment, smiles of promise. Why were people so happy when goodbyes are so hard, one not present might wonder? There were simply no goodbyes said this evening. The beauty of this place is that it has a way of drawing people back. The beauty of this place is that we know there isn't just one great artist in Eau Claire; there are many. The beauty of this place lies in the fact that we will see our friends again: maybe not tomorrow, or the next day, or the next, but it will be soon. Finally, the beauty of this place lies in the fact that there was no stagnation or terminus at the House of Rock on this particular weekend night. Each of these bands left a single word on the tongue of the Eau Claire music scene. That word is hope.

-Brendon Hertz, February 2012

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