



Isn't it ironic?

December 31, 2005

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Special to *The Daily Record*

Marylanders brave the elements to see Alanis Morissette; singer shows up late and underwhelms

It was Dec. 15, and on this night Baltimore was threatened with an ice and snow storm. Schools closed, events were canceled, and it was bone-chilling cold.

But then came the rain instead of the sleet, and although downtown Baltimore was deserted, people were streaming into Power Plant Plaza heading to the Alanis Morissette show. It was the 2005 MIX 106.5 Mistletoe Meltdown and the show was sold out at Ram's Head Live!

Morissette's performance was enigmatic. She had just performed in Baltimore in June on her solo acoustic tour, stopping at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, preceded by Merriweather Post Pavillion the previous summer. The venues are getting smaller and yet the shows are perplexingly not becoming more intimate.

People were lined up early, having made the trek much in advance, allowing for the bad weather, soaking wet and excited. But after the doors opened more than an hour and a half early, Alanis kept the audience waiting an additional half hour beyond the scheduled showtime. When she suddenly appeared onstage, she surprised everyone with her newly blond hair (further confusing her appearance with that of Sheryl Crow) and immediately launched into an a capella rendition of "Your House" to a total reverend silence.

She then took up her black sequined electric guitar matching her similarly sequined spaghetti-stringed tank top. The audience was then rushed through a whirlwind tour of her discography, never pausing for much of any comments as she usually does. She seemed



Making her third visit to Maryland in a year, Alanis Morissette, above, played at Ram's Head Live! earlier this month.

more uncomfortable than usual and in a hurry to get back off the stage. Her manic mannerisms were more pronounced than usual and disquieting at times.

Yet we observed sparks of her familiar self during certain songs while she jumped across the stage and when she played her instruments (acoustic and electric guitar; harmonica). However many songs had her playing her guitar to the band more often than to the audience.

The band, and hence the sound, sounded extremely sloppy. Although Morissette is still performing some late dates on her Diamond Wink Tour from this summer, they are all acoustic performances, thus likely not affording the band ample opportunity to rehearse and play together.

SONG LIST***Your House******Eight Easy Steps******Hands Clean******Hand In My Pocket******No Pressure Over Cappuccino******You Learn******Head Over Feet******Twenty-One Things I Want In A Lover******All I Really Want******That Particular Time******Crazy******You Oughta Know******Everything******Ironic******So Pure******Uninvited******Thank U***

"All I Really Want" was probably the loudest mess of music. Often there seemed to be extraneous sounds emanating from the stage — every band member appeared to be playing their own version and jamming out on their own. It was difficult to determine if the cacophony resulted from the band or a lack of adequate mixing.

Morissette soft-spokenly introduced "No Pressure Over Cappuccino" with a simple statement about having "never played before" although no one near could figure out whether that meant non-acoustically with a band, in Baltimore, or simply as a blond.

She seemed most comfortable when melded with her harmonica and shined in her solo harmonica piece on "You Learn." It wasn't until the 11th song of the night, her cover of "Crazy" by Seal, that she finally got her biggest audience response, ironically on the song of another. But that was quickly eclipsed by the arena rock response the audience rewarded her with on "You Oughta Know."

Morissette capitalized on the frenetic energy elicited a short time later with "Ironic" in having the audience sing almost the entire song themselves.

I can't obviate the fact that she appeared truly relieved when the show came to a close. It may have been a professional's frustration with the lack of sound quality, band rehearsal, or other negative circumstance, or simply a fleeting view into an unfortunate moment in her life. Artists do after all have a life which influences their music not just at it's point of creation.

Her encores "So Pure" and "Uninvited" were not as obvious choices as "Thank U," but appealed nonetheless to the hardcore fans.

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