
THE DAILY LOAF

Concert review: Rebelution, SOJA and Zion I at The Ritz (with pics + video)

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Every live show has its own overall vibe — the musical-madness-at-a-weekend-long-festival vibe, the superstar-rockin'-huge-arenas vibe, the folk rock, hip-hop or flailing-armed hippie vibe, the time-to-get-crazy-and-dance or the time-to-effing-rage-and-mosh-against life vibe, the somber and depressing Staind-pained type of vibe, the party time, let's-get-loose vibe ...



Rebelution's vibe is mad love. Throughout their concert at The Ritz this past Thursday night, I got the impression that the band has mad love for their fans, for the other musicians on tour with them and for their reggae-loving, rock star lives. And they spread all that love around with their melodic vibrations.



I couldn't help feeling a little old while I waited in the will-call crowd with mostly 17-to-early-20-year-olds. However, once I made my way into the packed venue, I quickly discovered all types of fans. Mingling with the predictable dreadlocked college kids were plenty of older dudes in Key West attire, 30-somethings on dates, sorority girls and groups of women enjoying a night on the town.

The first of the two opening acts, Zion I, was performing as my friend and I arrived. We checked out the last few songs from the innovative California duo and caught their harmonic blend of hip-hop beats and funky instrumentation before we headed to the bar to grab Red Stripes, the Jamaican beer on special in honor of the island sounds taking over The Ritz that night. (I'd just like to add that I'm not sure if the bartender was having a bad night or what, but the whole process took for-freaking-ever.)

By the time we made it back out to the crowd, Soldiers Of Jah Army (SOJA for short, pictured below left) had already launched into their signature song, "You Don't Know Me." I bee-lined for the stage, swerving through dancing bodies until I found a hole big enough for jamming out.

The energy was on from the start, as the wall-to-wall crowd — which I assume was mostly there to see Rebelution — showed their appreciation of SOJA's rastified rock with bobbing heads, swaying arms, and claps and howls of approval. The D.C.-based band went on to play "Here I Am," "Rest of My Life," and "I



Don't Wanna Wait," all tracks off their latest full-length, *Born in Babylon*. My one disappointment the entire night was that SOJA didn't play the title track off that album; however, the aforementioned songs offer a clear representation of the romantic but also realistic messages found in SOJA's layered lyrics. There were several times when the seven-man, roots reggae outfit went off into instrumental

musical mayhem, combining electric guitar, percussion, drums, bass, trumpet, and sax to show off their go-go infused skills. This kept the crowd dancing the entire set and, after SOJA left the stage, a flood of people went to buy SOJA souvenirs.



When Rebelution finally took the stage, The Ritz was jam-packed and filled with a familiar heady haze. My short-self was having trouble seeing. However, this was of no matter – it was awesome to watch all Rebelution’s faithful fans flood the stage and sing the lyrics of every song the Cali reggae rock band performed. I found this impressive because even though the hard-working band has reached great highs on iTunes and Cali radio stations, they aren’t really mainstream, though in Tampa they can apparently fill a venue with a sizable crowd capable of singing their mellow tunes word for word. Rebelution is proof that grassroots, independent and tour-driven music can build an authentic fanbase and carve out a legitimate place in the music world without radio support.

Rebelution rocked-out positive vibrations in fan favorites like “Green to Black,” “Feeling Alright” and “Safe and Sound” as well as many laid-back melodies from their newest album, suitably titled *Bright Side of Life*. “Lazy Afternoon” was probably my favorite selection performed from the new album. It definitely had a Jack Johnson effect, as all the couples were suddenly intertwined and dancing in unison to the dreamy song about lovers relaxing the day away. As a chick, this was oh-so-sweet to take in.

The one-love vibes reached a peak at the show’s encore with a collaborative performance featuring all three acts. Each talented musician gave mad props to the others as the three groups mixed their musical styles in a jam session that lured in audience participation and created a memorable ending to an all-around great show. I definitely caught the Rebelution contact high and my feet didn’t stop bouncing the entire night.



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