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BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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## Aretha At The Apollo

I saw Aretha Franklin at the Apollo last night, thanks to monkeyboy sharing an extra ticket with me. Spotted Roger Friedman -- soul aficionado and driving force behind the fine soul documentary *Only The Strong Survive* -- and felt very plugged in. Never seen the Queen of Soul in concert before and I've heard for years that she can be indifferent when not in the mood. But the Apollo seemed like the best bet for a good show and seeing her seemed like the perfect time to make my first trip to that venue.

The crowd was as raucous and responsive as one could hope and the show featured -- in true Apollo fashion -- introductions of famous people in the audience. They'd turn on some SERIOUS white lights and light up the crowd whenever someone was mentioned. Aretha gave a nice intro to Steve Harvey, who hadn't shown up yet and an even more ebullient intro for Rev. Al Sharpton, who clambered on stage and then did a little dance (quite convincingly) to the delight of the crowd.

The show itself? Aretha wasn't quite on auto-pilot but she wasn't transcendent either. She opened with "Respect" thankfully, and while there are a dozen or so songs you would think she just HAS to do, certainly any very short list would include "Think" and "Chain of Fools," neither of which made an appearance. Aretha did best on the slow groove numbers, scoring terrifically well with "Rock Steady" and a tremendous "Dr. Feelgood." She did a gospel number I wasn't too familiar with, a civil rights number that bored me and closed with "The Greatest Love Of All." An attempt to recreate her Grammy triumph when she sang an operatic aria fell flat as she cut off notes and basically failed to scale the heights.

But overall, she was in good spirits, dressed nicely, and shook her groove thang enough to dislodge both dangly earrings throughout the show. (Since she tossed them into the audience as an encore, I'll

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