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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Boz Scaggs/James Hunter In Concert

I was at Town Hall last night (one of my favorite venues in NYC) for a great double bill: Boz Scaggs and James Hunter. The Hunter set was everything I expected: he was casual and funny, his US pickup band was very tight (the drummer is a definite talent) and the 40 minute set was terrific. The only problem was having to sit down -- Hunter definitely deserves to be heard in a smoky club with a beer in your hand and a gal on your arm, figuratively speaking of course. He even got about half the crowd to give him a standing ovation -- something that never happens for opening acts.

Scaggs was very good, too, getting enthusiastic roars from the decidedly middle-aged audience. I'm not too familiar with his music (I got on board with "But Beautiful," his marvelous collection of jazz standards). But the Steely Dan vibe (with more soul but still laid-back) was great. Everything was precise, from the backup singers to the horns to the humidifier that was strapped to the microphone, giving a smoky jazzy aura to the air around Boz.

The staging was unintentionally hilarious: all the black musicians were on the right and all the white musicians were on the left. My only complaint was the audience. A yahoo three rows behind me talked during the first song. When he started talking during the second song (very loudly) I turned around and stared until he looked over, my face a mixture of pleading, come-on-buddy, and anger. He shut up. Then his companion started talking. They would stand up and leave during the middle of a song (as did the celebs in attendance from the Strokes et al who walked in and out every 10 minutes or so, presumably to do some blow or just to be wildly annoying). The guys gabbed on, whooping over one song, insisting as another one began that "this is gonna be good" and then talking about what they were gonna do after the show. It's very, very hard to enjoy a concert in even an intimate venue like Town Hall when you've got schmucks like that around.

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