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CONCERT REVIEWS



Destiny's Child was the star of the TRL tour at Philips Arena Saturday night in downtown Atlanta. Beyoncé (center) led Kelly (left) and Michelle through a set of their hits.

TRL's final act destined to be the concert's hit

By SONIA MURRAY
smurray@ajc.com

Saturday night's TRL tour at Philips Arena was probably many a young person's first concert.

Poor things. They didn't know they'd been set up.

It is pretty safe to assume that they, along with most in the two-thirds-full audience, had first seen Saturday's artists perform on the TV screen.

More than likely the five acts were in some high-budget, maybe million-dollar video.

And if that was indeed their first impression, Saturday's road show version of "TRL" had to be at least a slight downer.

Not that first concertgoers like 15-year-old Britney Young of Kingston, expected a production as elaborate as a video, but with so many acts on the bill barely into their 20s, some youthful exuberance should have been a given.

Instead it was act given on, act sings hits, act leaves. Which, granted, made it a smooth show, but hardly a spectacle.

Opening R&B trio J14 and pop quartet Dream even had to perform in front of some towering covered-up lumps — which turned out to be the backdrop for rapper Eve's segment.

Speaking of which, though Eve

THE SCOOP

- TRL Tour with Destiny's Child, Kelly Rowland and J14 Saturday.
- Philips Arena.
- The Verdict: TRL was often just OK.

was the first to really energize the audience, parents were covering their little one's ears often as she confidently roared through her hits "What Ya Want" and "Who's That Girl."

And her powerful take on domestic violence, "Love Is Blind," seemed to be a little too heavy for the young crowd.

But after a way-too-long intro to his accompanying St. Lunatics, 7-million-selling rapper Nelly ("Country Grammar"), followed, energizing the crowd again.

And by the time pop trio Destiny's Child hit the stage — some three hours after the show started — the decidedly mixed crowd had been hyped to full anticipation.

And the headliners did not disappoint.

In fact, the group, with the No. 1 single in the country ("Destiny Fulfilled"), was the only one on the bill that really tried to show more than we could get on video or CD.

And that was no reference to the hot shorts and tank tops they appeared in.

While Beyoncé is obviously the front woman, newest member Michelle got to show off her clearly church-groomed pipes early on "Bills, Bills, Bills." And when Kelly took the microphone it was apparent all three could lead.

Nonetheless, it was Beyoncé often up front, shaking her blonde mane like a rock star as they rolled through a remarkably wide-ranging — "Jesus Loves Me" AND "Nasty Girl!" — and impressive set of hits.

Songstress, ASO surpass limiting theme

By PIERRE RUME
prume@ajc.com

Mezzo-soprano Elizabeth Bishop, by singing Wagner sublimely Saturday with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, made an overwhelming declaration.

What counts most in the concert hall, what stirs an audience to stand and shout "brava!" and feel collectively moved, has nothing to do with clever packaging or a pretty stage design. Superlative musicianship is what matters, her singing seemed to say. Communicating with an audience is everything, revealing great truths through art is why we're all here in the first place.

Bishop accomplished all this when she sang the "Liebestod," the devastating final minutes from Wagner's love-found-and-lost opera, "Tristan und Isolde."

Earlier, in Wagner's "Wesendonck-Leider," her melodic, perfumed-tone, tight control and insight into the texts showed her a mezzo without flaws.

Wagner was one of just two composers

"MUSIC AND SEX"

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heard in the ASO's "Music and Sex" concert, the second in its thematic summer series. Themed evenings are a minor novelty compared with the wide-screen visual component added to these concerts, with stage design by Anne C. Patterson and lighting by Matthew Frey.

Their pattern is clear. A screen hung at the rear of the stage is illuminated with bright but unobtrusive colors, a few accessories make the image complete, with the idea to enhance the mood

rather than comment on the music. This it does.

Meanwhile conductor Donald Runnicles, music director of the San Francisco Opera and soon to be the ASO's principal guest conductor, was in top form.

He coaxed a wide, voluptuous, soft-focus sound for the "Tristan" Prelude. And there was nothing pale or scrawny in the second suite from Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé" — it was ripe, intense, vigorous.

From this concert it seems that Runnicles, known for his Wagner interpretations, might well be better at Ravel.

About the only time the glib "Music and Sex" title seemed appropriate at this concert was for Ravel's triumphantly minimalist "Bolero," an uncomplicated work of pure pleasure. Alas, the performance was splendid.

The ASO, sounding ragged on too little rehearsal, found reserves of energy. Still, "Bolero" was an unwelcome palate cleanser after Bishop's "Liebestod."

After such profundity, it was a vulgar way to send us out into the night.



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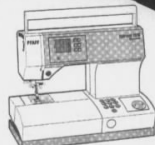
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